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Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Support Mission in Libya

I. Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to Security Council resolution 2376 (2017), covers political and security developments in Libya, provides an overview of the human rights and humanitarian situation in the country and outlines the activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) since the issuance of my previous report on 22 August 2017 (S/2017/726).

II. Political and security-related developments

2. The reporting period was marked by a renewed dynamism and engagement by all Libyan actors to conclude the transitional process, following the launch on 20 September 2017, during the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, of the United Nations action plan to resume an inclusive political process in Libya. Member States expressed a strong commitment to resolving the crisis in Libya and lending their political backing to the plan, while consolidating their ongoing efforts in support of the facilitation of my Special Representative for Libya, Ghassan Salamé.

3. To kick-start the implementation of the action plan, my Special Representative facilitated two rounds of consultations among representatives of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State to negotiate amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement. At the same time, my Special Representative engaged with a wide range of actors to discuss the next steps of the political transition and broaden support for and engagement in the political process.

4. The resumption of the Libyan political process under United Nations facilitation took place in a volatile security environment. While the ouster from Tripoli of armed groups opposed to the Government of National Accord marked some improvement to the security situation in the city, clashes continued to the west of the city between competing groups, particularly in Warshafanah and Sabratah and in the eastern city of Darnah. In Tripoli, clashes at Mitiga airport on 15 January 2018 were of particular concern owing to the high number of casualties and the fact that the clashes resulted in the closing of direct air traffic to and from Tripoli for a week.

5. At my request, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Jeffrey Feltman, visited Libya from 9 to 12 January and met with the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Head of the High Council of State,

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among others, to follow up on the implementation of the action plan and express my personal commitment to the resolution of the Libyan crisis.

Implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement

6. The objective of the United Nations action plan is to end the prolonged transition of Libya. There are three main elements to the plan: facilitate agreement on limited amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement to provide for a revitalized Government for the remainder of the transition; convene a national conference to revitalize the national polity and guide the remainder of the transition; and hold elections. At the same time, the plan is intended to reinvigorate Libyan institutions, engage armed groups, address urgent economic issues and promote local and national reconciliation.

7. The dialogue committees formed by the House of Representatives and the High Council of State met for the first time in Tunis on 26 September 2017. Each committee delegated members, including one woman, to form a joint drafting committee. The joint drafting committee agreed to a restructured Presidency Council and to an executive authority distinct from the Presidency Council. The drafting committee discussed various mechanisms to form the new executive authority but were unable to come to a consensus at the time of writing. On 10 November, UNSMIL presented the leadership of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State with a proposal drawing on elements that emerged from the talks to promote further dialogue between the parties and conclude the discussions on the executive authority. Both the House of Representatives and the High Council of State remain actively engaged and have met on at least four occasions on their own initiative.

8. On 6 December, a voter registration update was launched by the High Commission for National Elections to enable Libyan citizens to register and participate in any forthcoming electoral event. In preparation for the national conference, my Special Representative hosted a number of town hall meetings across Libya to hear from a wide range of interlocutors from the country's many constituencies.

9. The second anniversary of the signing of the Libyan Political Agreement was marked on 17 December. In addition to the issuance of a statement by the President of the Security Council on 14 December (S/PRST/2017/26), many other Member States publicly reiterated that the Agreement remained the only viable framework to end the Libyan political crisis.

International and regional engagement

10. International and regional engagement on Libya continued to play a vital role in supporting both the political process and the ongoing political transition.

11. My Special Representative attended the fourth meeting of the Ad Hoc High-level Committee on Libya in Brazzaville on 9 September 2017. On 21 September, the fourth meeting of the Quartet on Libya, composed of the African Union, the European Union, the League of Arab States and the United Nations, was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York. The Quartet issued a communiqué that endorsed the United Nations action plan and resolved to continue to work together to ensure a common and complementary approach to addressing the challenges facing Libya.

12. On 17 December, Tunisia hosted a tripartite meeting between the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia. The Ministers voiced their full support for the work of the United Nations and urged all parties to work collaboratively to implement the action plan. Morocco also hosted my Special Representative for a round of meetings to discuss the situation on the ground and advance the action plan.

On 3 and 4 January 2018, my Special Representative visited Niamey to meet with President Mahamadou Issoufou and N'Djamena to meet with President Idriss Déby, who expressed their concerns about the situation in Libya and their strong commitment to and support for a resolution to the crisis.

13. On 15 January, my Special Representative visited Addis Ababa to engage with officials of the African Union to further strengthen the collaboration on Libya between the African Union and the United Nations. My Special Representative and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, discussed concrete ways to reinforce UNSMIL cooperation with the Commission, ahead of the African Union Summit. During my participation in the Summit, I, along with my Special Representative, also had an opportunity to exchange views with many African leaders on the impact of the crisis on the continent and on ways to redouble our efforts to promote a peaceful resolution to the crisis and stable governance.

Situation in the western region

14. There was significant military activity in western Libya during the reporting period. The Anti-ISIL Operations Room, a force affiliated with the Government of National Accord, took control of Sabratah from two militia groups in October 2017, after three weeks of intense fighting which resulted in 43 deaths and more than 300 injuries. On 31 October, the Government of National Accord-affiliated Commander of the western military region launched a military operation against the Libyan National Army-affiliated Fourth Brigade in Warshafanah, south-west of Tripoli, to secure the territory under the command of forces allied with the Presidency Council. The clashes continued for 11 days and resulted in 18 deaths. In January 2018, the same Commander launched an operation to extend the control of forces allied with the Presidency Council along the border area with Tunisia around Ra's Ajdir.

15. There were also a significant number of incidents in and around Tripoli, some of which centred around the airport and caused it to close, most recently in mid-January. In October 2017, clashes erupted between pro-Government of National Accord forces and opposing forces south of Tripoli, which resulted in the arrest of a leader who supported the former regime. In retaliation, the opposing forces seized control of the water network and cut its supply to Tripoli for approximately one week, which also affected the well at the United Nations compound. On 16 and 17 October, in the Ghararat neighbourhood, the Special Deterrence Force conducted a raid to shut down a drug-dealing facility, which devolved into armed clashes that resulted in 7 fatalities, including 1 civilian, and 11 injuries on both sides. Owing to the neighbourhood's proximity to Mitiga airport and the use of light and medium weapons, United Nations air operations were halted from 16 to 18 October.

16. On 17 December, the Mayor of Misratah, Mohamed Eshtewi, was abducted in the vicinity of Misratah airport by unidentified armed men, possibly due to an internal feud. Mr. Eshtewi's body, bearing multiple gunshot wounds and a blow to the head, was later found in front of a local hospital. Investigations are currently under way. UNSMIL strongly condemned the assassination of an elected civilian mayor.

17. On 15 January 2018, there was an escalation in the clashes between the Special Deterrence Force and the Al-Bugra militia, who launched a major assault on Mitiga airport. The attack reportedly was planned to free individuals held at the detention facility operated by the Special Deterrence Force at the airport base, and possibly was also intended to take over control of the airport. The fighting lasted hours and involved tanks and other heavy weapons. At least 23 fatalities and more than 60 injuries were reported. A number of civilian aircraft parked at the airport were lightly damaged in the fighting and the airport was subsequently closed for one week while the area was checked for unexploded ordnance.

Situation in the eastern region

18. There were intermittent clashes between the forces of the Libyan National Army and armed groups in the towns of Benghazi and Darnah. In Benghazi, after further fighting around the Sidi Khuraybish area, the Libyan National Army announced its liberation on 28 December 2017. Tensions between the Government of National Accord Deputy Interior Minister Faraj al-Gaem and Libyan National Army forces led to an outbreak of violence on 10 November when four mortars hit the Interior Ministry building in Benghazi. Libyan National Army brigades took control of the building the following day and arrested the Deputy Interior Minister and his supporters. The Deputy Interior Minister has been held incommunicado since 11 November, amid allegations that he has been tortured. The clashes caused 14 fatalities, including at least 1 civilian, and injured 25 people, including at least 4 civilians. On 24 January 2018, a double vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack in the Salmani district in Benghazi claimed more than 30 lives, including children, and dozens were injured. The attack targeted senior security figures of Salafist ideology affiliated with the Libyan National Army. I, along with UNSMIL, immediately condemned the bombings and reiterated that there could be no military solution to the Libyan crisis. In retaliation, on 25 January, Libyan National Army Commander Mahmoud al-Werfalli carried out 10 summary executions. UNSMIL condemned the executions and called for the handing over of Mr. Al-Werfalli pursuant to his arrest warrant by the International Criminal Court. In the days that followed, more than 25 bodies, bearing gunshot wounds and with their hands tied, were found in various places in Benghazi. On 9 February 2018, 2 people were killed and 75 were injured in a bombing inside a mosque in the Majuri district in Benghazi.

19. The situation in Darnah continued to be tense and access to the city remained highly restricted, which has resulted in a worsening humanitarian situation. Areas of the town under the control of the Darnah Mujahadin Shura Council remain under siege by Libyan National Army forces. In the aftermath of the Benghazi bombing and retaliation, the Darnah Mujahadin Shura Council carried out three extrajudicial executions against members of a Libyan National Army cell suspected to be planning targeted assassinations.

20. On 30 October 2017, an unidentified aircraft carried out airstrikes on several positions around Darnah. At least 15 people, including 12 civilian women and children, were killed, and 17 others, including 6 civilians, were injured.

Situation in the southern region

21. The security situation in the south remained precarious. Criminal acts such as robbery, carjacking and kidnapping have frequently occurred in an environment marked by tenuous security and a proliferation of arms. On 3 November 2017, a group of unidentified armed men kidnapped four international workers upon their arrival at Awbari airport. Their status remains unknown. On 12 January 2018, an international aid worker and two Libyans were abducted in the neighbourhood of Abdelkafi in south Sabha city upon their return from Tripoli. All three were subsequently released. Also on 12 January, a Ukrainian doctor was abducted in Sabha and released two days later.

22. The Libyan National Army continued its attempts to enforce its presence in the south following the withdrawal of Misratan forces in 2017. On 27 August 2017, the Libyan National Army issued a decree establishing a military presence in Birak al-Shati', 120 km north of Sabha. On 28 September, armed clashes were reported between the 116th and 160th Brigades of the Libyan National Army over the Sabha oil depot.

23. The issue of foreign armed groups in Libya continues to be a destabilizing factor, particularly in the south-west and south-east. Between 19 and 21 September, clashes took place in Umm al-Aranib town, 100 km south of Sabha, between members of the Tebu tribe and rebels from Chad (Zaghawa tribe) and Darfur. The clashes erupted after the rebels attacked Tamsa checkpoint, 250 km south-east of Sabha, and killed five Tebu tribesmen. On 4 December, the city of Sabha witnessed clashes between Chadian mercenaries and armed men from the Qadhadhfa tribe over the allocation of resources. In the south-east, the Libyan National Army continuously targeted Chadian and Darfurian armed groups along the Libya-Chad border.

Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Libya

24. Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) intensified its movements around the former stronghold of Sirte. In response, airstrikes were carried out against ISIL elements by forces from Libya and the United States of America. On 22 September 2017, United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) confirmed six airstrikes against positions in the Khushum al-Khayl area, resulting in 17 ISIL fatalities. Four days later, AFRICOM announced that two additional airstrikes against ISIL militants had been conducted in coordination with the Government of National Accord. On 15 November, the Libyan Air Force carried out two airstrikes against ISIL positions in Harawah, a small town east of Sirte. On 17 November, in a desert area south of Sirte, United States airstrikes targeted ISIL positions, resulting in an undisclosed number of casualties. On 28 November, near Al-Fuqaha' town in Jufrah, the Libyan Air Force targeted an ISIL convoy, which resulted in an unspecified number of casualties. The Libyan National Army declared the area south of the Gulf of Sirte to the Black Mountain, including the oil field sites, a "military zone".

25. On 4 October, ISIL claimed responsibility for an attack against the Misratah courthouse. The attack led to the death of the 3 attackers and 4 people, including 2 civilians, and at least 41 others were wounded. On 8 October, an anti-crime police unit, backed by local security forces from Misratah, arrested six members of an alleged ISIL cell at a residence in Ru'aysat district, in eastern Misratah. Significant amounts of arms and ammunition, including man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS), were discovered and seized.

26. ISIL claimed to be behind two attacks against Libyan National Army checkpoints in central and southern Libya. On 23 August, there was an attack against a Libyan National Army checkpoint (90 km north-west of Al-Fuqaha'), that resulted in the deaths of nine members of the Libyan National Army and two civilians. On 31 August, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack on a Libyan National Army checkpoint in Nawfaliyah caused two Libyan National Army fatalities and injured four people. On 25 October, there was an attack on another Libyan National Army checkpoint, the "60th Gate", 60 km south-west of Ajdabiya. Two guards from the 152nd Brigade were killed in the attack and four others were injured.

27. On 11 January 2018, in Abu Qurayn town in Misratah, Bunyan Marsus forces announced the arrest of an ISIL member with a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device after he failed to detonate it at the security checkpoint. After his arrest, Ministry of Interior forces in Tripoli established checkpoints and arrested two other suspected ISIL members.

28. While no longer in control of territory, ISIL continues to be active in Libya and retains the ability to conduct complex terrorist attacks. ISIL so-called "desert units" continue to operate in the oil crescent, the central region around Jufrah, as well as in the south of Libya. There are sleeper cells in other parts of the country, including the western region. That presence is augmented by a number of ISIL elements moving into Libya following their eviction from Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic.

Economic situation

29. While economic indicators reflected a significant improvement in the Libyan economy owing to an increase in oil production (1.1 million barrels per day in January 2018, compared with 860,000 barrels per day in August 2017), as well as an increase in international oil prices, structural issues have not been addressed, causing concern that the fiscal and monetary crisis will worsen further in the long term. The National Oil Corporation reached an agreement with the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries that granted Libya a continued exemption from measures aimed at cutting global oil output.

30. Libyan authorities have not yet reached an agreement on the budget framework for 2018. The deepening monetary crisis, defined by rising inflation and a loss in purchasing power, required the Government of National Accord to increase spending to provide public services. Currency depreciation hit a record high on the black market towards the end of 2017 reaching 9.8 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar, compared with the official exchange rate of 1.39 Libyan dinars to 1 United States dollar. The country's currency rapidly gained value in the informal market following an announcement by the Central Bank that it would increase the supply of foreign currencies available and an announcement by the Ministry of Economy that it would increase imports of non-food items.

31. Political divisions and insecurity further exacerbated the country's macroeconomic instability. The contested vote by the House of Representatives regarding the replacement of the Governor of the Central Bank on 19 December created uncertainty concerning the legitimate authority of the Bank.

32. UNSMIL received reports of pervasive corruption. Abuse of the official exchange rate for instant profit on the black market has driven up prices and created shortages of basic commodities. There are widespread reports of bribes being paid to facilitate transactions. Porous borders have enabled the systemic smuggling of goods, including fuel subsidized for the benefit of the Libyan people, which contributes to the illegal economy.

III. Constitution-making process

33. Members of the Constitution Drafting Assembly were active in their outreach to promote the draft constitution adopted by the body on 29 July 2017. Challenges against the legitimacy of the Constitution Drafting Assembly and the validity of the vote adopting the draft were filed in court. On 7 January 2018, the Southern Benghazi Court rejected a challenge to the continued legitimacy of the constitutional body ahead of a definitive ruling expected by the Tripoli Supreme Court. On 14 February 2018, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the draft constitution, thereby removing all legal obstacles to the holding of a referendum.

34. Libyan and international organizations have worked to support the outreach by the Constitution Drafting Assembly to pave the way for a possible referendum ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections. Particular effort has gone into reaching out to communities opposed to the draft, including some minority groups.

IV. Other activities of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya

A. Electoral support

35. There was significant progress with regard to preparations for elections in 2018. UNSMIL provided advice and support to the High Commission for National Elections and other Libyan counterparts. An exercise to update and expand voter registration was launched on 6 December 2017, on the basis of the voter roll from 2014, which included 1.48 million registered voters. At the time of writing, there were more than 600,000 new registrants following the launch of the exercise, and the number of registered voters was more than 2 million as at 24 January 2018. More than 1 million women had registered to vote, representing 42 per cent of the overall number of registered voters. The registration of out-of-country voters was due to start in early February.

36. UNSMIL established three working groups with international electoral assistance partners on voter registration, public outreach and electoral legislation to coordinate the efforts of the international community in support of the electoral process. In coordination with the High Commission for National Elections, workshops were held to discuss electoral draft legislation aimed at supporting the finalization of an electoral law.

37. Following a request by the High Commission for National Elections, a needs assessment mission, led by the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, was deployed in September 2017. A new electoral assistance project from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was developed to complement the Mission's efforts. The project, entitled "Promoting Elections for the People of Libya", received funding of more than $10 million from the European Union, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

B. Human rights, transitional justice and the rule of law

38. Armed groups engaged in ongoing fighting committed violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. The weakness of judicial institutions and the general climate of lawlessness and insecurity hampered victims' ability to seek protection, justice and redress.

39. Ongoing conflicts continued to claim civilian casualties. During the reporting period, UNSMIL documented a total of 135 civilian casualties, including 56 deaths and 79 injuries. Leading causes of death included gunfire, airstrikes, explosive remnants of war, improvised explosive devices and shelling.

40. UNSMIL recorded seven attacks on health-care facilities in Benghazi, Misratah, Awbari, Sabratah, Sirte and Warshafanah. UNSMIL documented physical assaults against medical personnel during the performance of their professional duties, and the unlawful deprivation of liberty of doctors in Bayda', Darnah, Sabha and Tripoli. The Libyan National Army continued to impose restrictions on the freedom of movement of Darnah residents and on the entry of certain goods into the city.

Abductions and killings

41. Armed groups continued to take hostages or otherwise unlawfully deprive civilians of liberty. Civilians were targeted for ransom or on the basis of their family or tribal identity, political affiliations and opinions. Arrests on grounds of violating "public morals" were documented in both western and eastern Libya.

42. In the context of armed clashes in the Gharara area of Tripoli between the Special Deterrence Forces and members of the Al-Mungar family between 16 and 22 October 2017, the former captured three men alive. Their bodies were found days later bearing gunshot wounds. On 26 October, 36 bodies were found in Abyar, some 60 km north-east of Benghazi. Several bore gunshot wounds and signs of torture and had their hands tied. Armed masked men had reportedly seized several victims from their Benghazi homes days or months before their bodies were found. The Libyan National Army announced that it would conduct investigations into the incidents, but no information has been shared.

43. UNSMIL also documented politically motivated assassinations. On 4 January 2018, unidentified assailants shot dead the Director of the Department of Education at his home in Abyar. He had reportedly received death threats after announcing his candidacy for parliamentary elections.

44. At the time of writing, a field commander with the Special Forces in Benghazi, Mahmoud al-Werfalli, had turned himself in to the military police in eastern Libya, but had reportedly been subsequently released, following violent protests demanding his release. On 15 August, the International Criminal Court had issued an arrest warrant against Mr. Al-Werfalli for the crime of murder for his alleged involvement in the summary executions of suspected fighters with the Benghazi Revolutionaries Shura Council and other opponents.

Detention, torture and deaths in custody

45. Across the country, arbitrary detention continued to be widespread in both official prisons and detention facilities controlled by armed groups. In October 2017, judicial police officers estimated that some 6,400 men, women and children were held in 26 official prisons and that some 75 per cent were in pretrial detention. Limited progress was made in reviewing individual cases to ensure that those held were either referred to trial or released, in accordance with Libyan law.

46. UNSMIL conducted six visits to prisons in western Libya and interviewed detainees in private. Despite repeated requests, the Mission was not able to visit the Mitiga detention facility, controlled by the Special Deterrence Force, where some 2,600 people were held in December. UNSMIL continued to receive credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment, poor detention conditions, medical neglect and the denial of visits from family and lawyers. There is a similar pattern of unlawful arrests in eastern Libya. UNSMIL has documented prolonged arbitrary and incommunicado detention, torture, ill-treatment and inhumane detention conditions at Kuwayfiah Prison. UNSMIL has raised concerns in writing and other official communications with relevant authorities. The exact number of detainees held at Kuwayfiah is unknown, as UNSMIL has been unable to visit the facility since its evacuation from eastern Libya in May 2014. In a meeting with UNSMIL in August 2017, judicial police officers estimated that there were roughly 1,800 detainees held at Kuwayfiah. The entire prison compound is guarded by the Libyan National Army and allied armed groups.

Groups in vulnerable situations

Migrants

47. Migrants were subjected to arbitrary detention and torture, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, abduction for ransom, extortion, forced labour and unlawful killings. Perpetrators included State officials, armed groups, smugglers, traffickers and criminal gangs.

48. UNSMIL visited four detention centres overseen by the Department for Combating Illegal Migration, and observed severe overcrowding and appalling hygiene conditions. Detainees were malnourished and had limited or no access to medical care. As at 15 January 2018, there were some 5,200 migrants held in Department centres, down from approximately 19,000 in October 2017, according to the Department.

49. UNSMIL continued to document reckless and violent conduct by the Libyan Coast Guard in the course of rescues and/or interceptions at sea. For instance, on 6 November 2017, members of the Coast Guard beat migrants with a rope and pointed firearms in their direction during an operation at sea. UNSMIL also documented the use of excessive and unlawful lethal force by officials of the Department for Combating Illegal Migration. On 19 November, during a raid on a makeshift migrant camp in the area of Warshafanah, members of the Tajura' and Janzur groups affiliated with the Department for Combating Illegal Migration opened fire on migrants without providing any verbal warning, causing a number of deaths and injuries.

Women

50. Women were arbitrarily detained, often because of family affiliations or for "moral crimes" such as engaging in sexual relations outside of marriage, and were held in facilities without female guards, exposing them to the risk of sexual abuse. Women reported being strip-searched and subjected to intrusive cavity searches by or under the gaze of male guards. Migrant women and girls were subjected to rape, forced prostitution and other forms of sexual violence at the hands of State officials, members of armed groups, smugglers and traffickers. A number of women activists reported facing questioning and harassment when travelling abroad without a male "guardian".

Children

51. UNSMIL continued to receive reports of grave violations against children, including the killing, maiming and abduction of children. During the reporting period, 20 children were killed and 25 were injured. Children were killed as a result of air strikes as well as stray bullets, or were killed or injured in incidents involving explosive remnants of war or unidentified explosive ordnance. The conflict-related abduction of children was reportedly perpetrated by different armed groups, militias and criminal organizations. The recruitment and use of children by armed groups, as well as their detention on the basis of their alleged or actual association with other parties to the conflict, continued to be reported.

Activists and media workers

52. Media professionals, writers and activists faced restrictions to their rights to freedom of expression and association and were subjected to abductions, arbitrary detention, intimidation and threats. On 13 November 2017, fighters affiliated with the Libyan National Army raided the offices of the Libyan Roh Al-Watan television station in Benghazi and confiscated equipment. They also briefly detained two journalists and subjected them to ill-treatment.

53. On 28 August, an event at the "Faqih centre" in Tripoli to launch a collection of short stories and poems by Libyan authors was suspended following warnings that Special Deterrence Force members were heading to the venue with armoured vehicles. On 30 August, the Government's General Committee of Culture criticized the collection's alleged "pornographic and immoral" content and called for legal action against those involved.

Transitional justice and national reconciliation

54. With assistance provided by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund and UNDP, UNSMIL continued to support the national reconciliation process through a comprehensive and inclusive programme. On 20 and 21 September 2017, UNSMIL facilitated a dialogue between representatives from Zintan and Tripoli to reach an agreement providing for the safe return of persons, through a series of security and accountability mechanisms, who were displaced to Zintan from the capital in 2014.

55. Following a reconciliation process between the Qadhadhfa and Awlad Sulayman tribes that began in May 2017, a women's track of the dialogue took place in Tripoli on 6 November. On 26 November, delegations from the cities of Kabaw and Batin al-Jabal in the Nafusa mountains agreed to establish an independent fact-finding committee to investigate past violations and called for the creation of a national land commission. The dialogue laid the basis and set the principles for a future negotiation process between the two neighbouring communities.

56. On 24 October, an agreement was reached between tribal representatives and notables from eastern Libya and Misratah, under the auspices of UNSMIL. The meeting led to the establishment of an official liaison committee between both parties to promote the safe return of displaced communities from Benghazi and Tawurgha'.

57. In December 2017, there were a series of protests by the Tawurgha' against the dire conditions in camps, and against the slow implementation of an agreement between the Misratah and the Tawurgha' on the return of internally displaced persons and reparations that had been endorsed by the Presidency Council in June. On 26 December, the Council announced that displaced persons from Tawurgha' would be able to begin to return to their city starting 1 February 2018. The Council also instructed relevant national security and service institutions to lay the ground for returns and the Central Bank to dedicate funds for the first batch of reparations for victims. Decree 1423 of 2017, issued by the Council on 26 December, established a committee tasked with the implementation of the agreement reached by the Misratah/Tawurgha' dialogue committee in August 2016 on returns and reparations. On 1 February 2018, families from the Tawurgha' community were prevented by extremist elements from returning to their town as had been planned. UNSMIL deplored the threats made against members of that community and called for the implementation of the agreement allowing their return.

58. In December, more than 70 tribal leaders, elders, notables and activists from the south signed a comprehensive "Charter for peaceful coexistence in Fezzan", whereby they agreed on a joint conflict analysis framework and a set of measures, mechanisms and principles to bring peace to the south of Libya. UNSMIL engaged with other southern constituencies to broaden grass-roots support for the Charter.

59. At the national level, a preparatory committee for national reconciliation, established by a decree of the Presidency Council on 14 May, has yet to be activated. On 16 October, the Council issued a decree providing for the creation of a national reparations fund for all conflict-related victims since 2011, but the administrators of the fund have yet to be nominated.

Judicial and penal system

60. Prosecutors, judges and other judicial staff continued to work in a difficult security environment, while attacks on court and prosecution complexes continued, such as the attack against the Misratah courthouse on 4 October 2017. Despite the challenges, a partial reactivation of prosecution and court offices took place in Sirte and Warshafanah.

61. UNSMIL continued to support the strengthening of national institutions. In September and December, UNSMIL, in cooperation with UNDP, facilitated two workshops on arbitrary and prolonged detention, bringing together representatives of municipalities, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, academics, civil society activists, prison managers and judicial police officers.

62. In December, UNSMIL facilitated a week-long training on international human rights law in Tripoli for 17 senior officers of the Libyan Presidential Guard. UNSMIL continued to advise the Presidential Guard on the establishment of an internal compliance and accountability mechanism.

63. Also in December, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), in partnership with the Ministry of Justice of Libya and the United States Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, organized a workshop on criminal justice reform that focused on addressing proposed amendments to the Libyan Code of Criminal Procedure. Participants included representatives of the Ministry of Justice, the High Judicial Institute, the Supreme Court, the Office of the General Prosecutor, academia and civil society. On 10 December, UNODC, in cooperation with an Algerian school for penitentiary management, began an in-depth training course for 12 Libyan judicial police officers in Algeria, aimed at strengthening prison management and fostering the social reintegration of offenders.

Human rights due diligence policy

64. The United Nations system in Libya continued its efforts towards the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces. UNSMIL and the United Nations country team are currently reviewing their support to Libyan security forces, with a view to mitigating any identified risk that recipients of United Nations support might commit grave violations of international humanitarian law, human rights law or refugee law.

65. On 4 September 2017, the Libya human rights due diligence policy task force adopted a risk assessment with respect to United Nations support to the Libyan Coast Guard. Involved United Nations agencies are currently in the process of implementing several risk-mitigating measures, including increased monitoring, advocacy and accountability. A risk assessment and the development of mitigating measures with respect to United Nations support to the Department for Combating Illegal Migration are currently under consideration.

C. Security sector

Support for Libyan planning for interim security arrangements

66. The relative calm in Tripoli allowed for further implementation of the Tripoli security plan. With continued support from UNSMIL and the European Union Liaison and Planning Cell, both police and army made progress towards greater operational control of the city. Donors committed funds to security-related projects, including technical support to the Libyan criminal justice system, the joint community policing programme of UNDP/UNSMIL and the model police station. Additional support was provided for the Joint Operations Centre in Tripoli. The Presidential Guard is playing an increasingly prominent role in Libyan security affairs. Those "bottom-up" initiatives contribute to creating the conditions necessary to further unify the Libyan security apparatus.

Arms and ammunition management

67. In collaboration with the Mine Action Service, UNSMIL assisted Libyan authorities in their efforts to address the threat posed by the uncontrolled proliferation of arms and ammunition. In Misratah, the Mine Action Service began a stockpile clearance and destruction project. In Sirte, efforts to coordinate the international response to the threat of explosive hazards continued.

68. With a view to enhancing the response to the current humanitarian situation and enabling safe access for internally displaced persons and returnees, UNSMIL and the Mine Action Service organized training sessions for national authorities on institutional and operational capacity-building, including explosive ordnance disposal. The Libyan Mine Action Centre was also supported with the development and implementation of national standards. The Mine Action Service continued its coordination with risk education partners to raise awareness about the dangers posed by explosive hazards. From July to December 2017, approximately 9,000 people participated in such programmes across Libya. The Mine Action Service also continued its women-focused risk-awareness training regarding small arms and light weapons.

D. Women's empowerment

69. During the reporting period, UNSMIL observed a positive trend in women's engagement in various political and social processes throughout the country, coupled with demands for reconciliation at local levels. Three Ministries (Education, Labour and Economy) established dedicated units to support women's empowerment in Libya. UNSMIL provided the women representatives in the joint drafting committee with technical assistance to ensure women's perspectives were reflected in amendments to the Libyan Political Agreement. The representatives succeeded in ensuring that the Women's Support and Empowerment Unit of the Presidency Council reports to the Prime Minister with regard to any future restructuring of the Government.

70. To promote the role of women in Libyan political life and gender sensitivity in the legislative process, UNSMIL supported the establishment of a forum composed of 14 women, which reviewed the draft constitutional proposal from a gender perspective. The forum will present comprehensive recommendations to members of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State in February 2018.

71. UNSMIL, in partnership with UNDP, completed a comprehensive process for designing a peace campaign on social coexistence to be led by Libyan women. Various capacity-building activities continued. In November 2017, an induction training on gender and gender mainstreaming was provided to 20 female staff members of the Women's Empowerment Unit at the Ministry of Education.

E. Young people, peace and security

72. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), discussed a strategic plan for young people for 2018, supported by the Networks of Mediterranean Youth Project, with local partners in a workshop held in Tunis. Within that framework and in collaboration with Libyan youth and women's associations, UNFPA conducted two workshops in Tripoli and Misratah on public policies, as well as training sessions for trainers on civic engagement for social change, sexual and reproductive health, the prevention of gender-based violence and fighting drug abuse. In December,

UNFPA supported the Y-PEER Youth Network in developing its strategy on peer education for young people for 2018. UNESCO conducted training sessions for teachers, cascade training sessions and awareness-raising workshops in Benghazi, Misratah, Sabha and Tripoli that focused on the strategic plan for young people, which were followed up by local microprojects on peacebuilding and countering violent extremism.

F. Coordination and international assistance

73. The overarching coordination framework for international technical cooperation with the Government of Libya, the Senior Policy Committee, created two new working groups on human rights and migration, respectively. A meeting will be convened in Tripoli at the end of February 2018 to take stock of the progress made by the working groups in finalizing sectoral priorities.

74. On 29 November 2017, the United Nations development system, together with humanitarian agencies and Member States working in Libya, gathered 67 national officials from various Libyan ministries and national entities as well as representatives of civil society to discuss a draft strategic framework for Libya for the period 2019–2020. Three priority areas were identified, including governance, social services and economy, with peace and security as the overarching theme and a link to the Sustainable Development Goals. The United Nations country team was preparing the country assessment and the strategic framework for 2019–2020, which were expected to be finalized with the Government by the end of January 2018.

G. Humanitarian, stabilization and development assistance

75. The humanitarian situation in Libya deteriorated during the reporting period. Refugees and migrants continued to be subjected to violence, forced labour and other grave violations and abuses. Reports of migrants allegedly being sold into the slave trade in Libya shed light on the appalling conditions the majority endure in a climate of impunity.

76. On the margins of the African Union-European Union Summit in Abidjan on 29 and 30 November 2017, a joint African Union, European Union and United Nations task force on migration was established to support migrants and refugees along migration routes as well as inside Libya. In December, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) identified 621,706 migrants across the country but estimates the actual number to be between 700,000 to 1,000,000.

77. IOM has scaled up its voluntary humanitarian returns programme. As at 25 January 2018, a total of 7,723 migrants wishing to return home were repatriated. During the reporting period, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) evacuated a total of 389 refugees and asylum seekers in coordination with Libyan authorities. Approximately 24,000 refugees and migrants reached Italy by way of the central Mediterranean route and some 780 lost their lives or have gone missing. IOM and UNHCR undertook protection monitoring and provided assistance at 12 disembarkation points in western Libya.

78. From September to December 2017, UNHCR registered 2,277 refugees and asylum seekers in Libya. The number of refugees now exceeds 45,000. UNHCR made more than 450 monitoring visits to detention centres throughout Libya, provided medical assistance and advocated for alternatives to detention. Some 1,034 refugees and asylum seekers were released from detention following interventions by UNHCR.

79. Since November, UNHCR has scaled up its resettlement and humanitarian evacuations programme with a view to providing solutions in third countries for the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers. Between November and December, a total of 659 refugees were processed through direct resettlement and humanitarian evacuations.

80. Sporadic escalations of violence in western Libya resulted in small-scale displacements and further need for medical support. The World Health Organization (WHO) provided medical supplies that benefited around 90,000 individuals, provided trauma kits that could treat more than 1,600 moderate to severe injuries and procured 42,000 bags of blood. In November, WHO deployed a team of 16 specialized doctors and nurses, provided life-saving medicine and restored services to a hospital in Ghat that had been closed for the past two years.

81. Following the reported increase in maternal deaths in the south of Libya, UNFPA and WHO jointly deployed mobile health teams to enable 1,850 women to deliver safely in the affected areas, and made available emergency reproductive health kits. WHO also supported the Ministry of Health in expanding its disease early warning system network to more than 100 sentinel sites and detention centres across Libya. In November, the Ministry of Health, with the support of WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and IOM conducted a national immunization campaign resulting in about 1.4 million children receiving vaccinations against polio, and 721,488 children receiving vaccinations against measles, mumps and rubella.

82. UNICEF provided 18,350 migrants and refugees with access to safe water and sanitation services at the assembly points of Sabratah/Dahman, Tajura' and Gharyan. It also rehabilitated water and sanitation facilities in 30 schools in Benghazi, Sabha, Awbari, Tripoli and Sirte that continued to provide a conducive learning environment to 19,510 children. In Benghazi and Tubruq, 5,000 internally displaced persons and returnee families gained access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene assistance.

83. UNDP, through its resilience and recovery programme, is working closely with municipalities to build their capacities as legitimate authorities that are responsive to the needs of their populations and able to deliver essential public services. In that context, UNDP worked in key communities on the migration routes (from Sabha and Murzuq to Kufrah and Sabratah, and not least to Benghazi and Tripoli) engaging local municipalities, identifying entry points for the integration of key community members, enhancing local stability and community security, advancing the socioeconomic development of municipalities and providing income generation opportunities for communities, and especially young people.

84. UNICEF provided community reintegration packages to 125 children and adolescents released from armed groups in Zintan. Some 3,500 adolescents participated in sessions on prevention of recruitment by armed groups. In addition, some 70 justice professionals (police officers, judges, prosecutors and social workers) were trained on child-friendly procedures and at least 121 migrant women and children were provided with specialized psychosocial services in Sabratah.

85. During the reporting period, more than 9,000 students (including 4,767 girls and young women) benefited from catch-up and remedial education classes in conflict-affected and underserved areas in places such as Benghazi, Sirte and eight areas in southern Libya. A total of 4,120 children (including 2,120 girls) benefited from the establishment of six mobile classes in Benghazi. In Benghazi and Sirte, 61,315 children (including 31,044 girls) received essential learning materials and supplies. As part of UNICEF support for teachers' development, a total of 187 teachers and master trainers (including 146 women) received training.

86. The Stabilization Facility for Libya received financial contributions amounting to $62 million by the end of January 2018. By the end of 2017, the programme had rehabilitated 22 facilities, including schools, hospitals and sports centres, across Libya.

V. Deployment of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya and security arrangements

87. UNSMIL and the United Nations country team have gradually increased their operations inside Libya and maintain a temporary rotational presence of security, support and substantive personnel in the country. On 30 December 2017, the United Nations Guard Unit completed its deployment to safeguard UNSMIL premises in Tripoli. On 7 February 2018, the Department of Safety and Security lifted the evacuation status in Libya.

Security and safety of staff members and operations

88. United Nations personnel in Libya continued to work in a high-risk security environment. Restrictions continued to be imposed on the movement of personnel in Libya and on international staff taking flights to Tripoli and other destinations within Libya.

VI. Observations

89. Since the launch of the United Nations action plan, significant progress has been attained in revitalizing the political process in Libya. The passing of the second anniversary of the Libyan Political Agreement without major incident was a demonstration of the commitment by all parties to the process and the Agreement as the sole political framework to end the transition. In that regard, I strongly welcome the renewed dynamism of Libyan actors and their engagement with my Special Representative. I also welcome the unity of the international community behind the action plan and the efforts of my Special Representative for the establishment of stable, unified, representative and effective governance, as reflected in the statement by the President of the Security Council of 14 December 2017 (S/PRST/2017/26).

90. The mutual recognition of the House of Representatives and the High Council of State and the formation of the joint drafting committee reflected a commitment to reject military solutions and find political solutions as part of a Libyan-owned and Libyan-led process. The meetings of the joint drafting committee concluded in focusing on the need for a more inclusive, representative and effective government to support the end of the transitional period and prepare for elections. It is my hope that a spirit of collaboration and compromise will continue to prevail among all Libyans as they forge the path forward.

91. I am encouraged by the support displayed by Libyans across the country at the prospect of holding elections to conclude the transitional period. The high number of voter registrations, including by women and young people, is testament to Libyans' eagerness to participate in free and fair elections that will mark the end of the transitional period. The United Nations remains committed to supporting the High Commission for National Elections throughout the electoral cycle. However, voter registration is only one of a number of prerequisites needed for elections to take place. It is essential to have broad political consensus regarding the elections in order to encourage both participation as well as acceptance of the results. It is also critical that the appropriate legal framework be in place. I therefore urge the House of

Representatives to uphold its duty to the Libyan people by enacting the requisite legislation, in accordance with the Libyan Political Agreement. The United Nations stands ready to support those processes as needed.

92. I also welcome efforts to hold local municipal elections as the terms of municipal authorities draw to a close. Municipalities have assumed increasing responsibilities not only in governance but also in the provision of basic services. It is therefore paramount that support for those institutions is maintained and further strengthened.

93. My Special Representative has rightly identified the need for meaningful reconciliation to take place in order to rebuild a national polity. Those efforts are key to the reunification of institutions and the restoration of security and stability. In that regard, I join his commitment to engaging and including actors and groups who were previously marginalized and who are now prepared to commit to the political process.

94. I also welcome ongoing efforts by communities across Libya to engage with one another to reach local reconciliation agreements. Those agreements, some of which have been facilitated by the United Nations, are critical to creating the building blocks for reconciliation at the national level. They are also vital for improving the lives of those affected by conflict, as they enable in some cases the return of internally displaced persons to their homes with security and dignity. In that regard, I am encouraged by the announcement of the Government of National Accord to secure the return of Tawurgha' internally displaced persons to their homes. I further encourage the activation of a preparatory committee for national reconciliation and the establishment of a national reconciliation fund.

95. I strongly welcome the active engagement of Libyan women in the political process, as well as in ongoing reconciliation efforts. In that regard, I was pleased to see that women were part of the joint drafting committee. Nonetheless, more needs to be done to ensure that representation of women translates into effective and meaningful participation. I continue to call on all Libyan political actors to strive for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.

96. I am concerned by the deteriorating humanitarian situation across parts of the country. I welcome the Libyan Government's allocation of $5 million to the Stabilization Fund and call upon Member States to continue to provide much-needed assistance. In that regard, I urge funding for the Libya Humanitarian Response Plan, which aims to support 1.1 million people in need across the country.

97. I also remain concerned by the underlying insecurity across much of the country. Over the past month, violent clashes in Tripoli resulted in the closing of Mitiga airport for close to a week while Benghazi witnessed bomb attacks on 24 January and 9 February, which resulted in the loss of lives, including those of civilians. I call on all actors to avoid any further deterioration of the security situation and to engage in meaningful dialogue to find a political solution. I reiterate the urgent need to reform and unify armed and security forces, operating under civilian leadership. The widespread proliferation of arms in the country also needs to be addressed, owing to the threat they pose to law and order and the extension of State authority.

98. I take note of the efforts made by Libyan experts to address the continued widespread presence of mines and unexploded ordnance, and express my gratitude to donors who have supported the increase in capacity that has made such efforts possible. Explosive hazards continue to pose a significant, indiscriminate threat to the civilian population and I urge Member States to expand their funding to activities in priority areas through the provision of training and equipment.

99. I am deeply disturbed by the continuing reports of human trafficking in Libya. I encourage the Libyan authorities to spare no efforts to identify and prosecute those responsible for such heinous crimes. I call on all actors to cooperate with and support the efforts of the Libyan authorities to bring perpetrators to justice. The plight of migrants and the abuses they suffer both in Libya and as they attempt to cross the Mediterranean continue to call for joint, concerted and urgent action. I am hopeful that the newly established United Nations, African Union, and European Union task force will help to address the issue of migration in a comprehensive manner. I also commend recent efforts by countries of origin to address the plight of their citizens. United Nations agencies will continue to address the humanitarian situation and have already increased their support to voluntary repatriation and reintegration initiatives. I commend countries that have agreed to host migrants who are unable to return to their countries of origin and are in need of asylum.

100. I wish to recognize the important role of regional organizations and neighbouring States in support of the United Nations facilitation of the Libyan political process. The unity of the international community in supporting a peaceful resolution to the Libyan crisis remains of critical importance. I wish to express my gratitude for the strong support Member States have shown to my Special Representative and encourage them to ensure that the United Nations is able to maintain the momentum generated over the past few months.

101. I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Nepal for providing the personnel of the United Nations Guard Unit. I also wish to express my gratitude to my Special Representative, Ghassan Salamé, and to the staff of the United Nations system in Libya for their dedication and hard work in support of a peaceful end to the transition in Libya and the establishment of a stable and effective governance that responds to the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people.

United Nations S/2018/141

Security Council

Distr.: General
26 February 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

On instructions from my Government, and in response to the letter dated 10 February 2018 from the representative of the occupying Israeli authorities (S/2018/111), I should like to convey to you the following information.

The Syrian Arab Republic has sent many letters to the Security Council, the most recent of which was the letter dated 7 February 2017 (S/2018/100), in response to ongoing Israeli aggressions against its territory. In those letters, we repeatedly called upon the Council to condemn Israeli acts of aggression against the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Syria, and to immediately take forceful measures to curb such acts and hold Israel accountable. The Syrian Arab Republic also warned Israel of the grave consequences of its ongoing aggressions and reaffirmed that Israel bears full responsibility for them.

The United States of America and certain Western countries protect Israel and provide it with cover for its repeated aggressions. Moreover, the Israeli leadership is certain that it will not be held accountable for its crimes. That is why Israel decided to carry out yet another attack against the Syrian Arab Republic. At dawn on Saturday, 10 February 2018, Israeli warplanes penetrated the airspace of the Syrian Arab Republic and struck a number of sites in the central and southern parts of the country.

In view of the above, and given that its warnings had fallen on deaf ears, the Syrian Arab Republic exercised its inherent and legitimate right to defend its people and sovereignty in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, in particular its Article 51. The air defences of the Syrian Arab Army responded to enemy F-16 aircraft, hitting several and bringing down one.

The claims and lies in the Israeli letter are nothing more than a fresh attempt to deceive and turn the facts upside down, and thus deny that Israel is responsible for its dangerous policy of aggression, practices State terrorism, continues to support armed terrorist groups and continues to violate Security Council resolution 350 (1974) concerning the separation of forces, as well as Council resolutions and international instruments concerning counter-terrorism. Like its predecessors, this attempt is doomed to failure, because everyone is now aware that Israel is a rouge entity that flouts international law, and that the threat Israel poses to international peace and security is no less dangerous than that posed by the terrorist organizations Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and the Nusrah Front.

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The Syrian Arab Republic reiterates that the repeated Israeli attacks against it have not and will not succeed in protecting the terrorist organizations that are Israel's partners and proxies. Neither will those attacks divert the Syrian Arab Army from continuing to make gains in combating terrorism and other Israeli tactics in many parts of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The Syrian Arab Republic also reiterates that it will not hesitate to exercise its right to respond to Israeli aggressions and defend its territory, people and sovereignty by all the means sanctioned by the Charter of the United Nations, international law and international humanitarian law.

I should be grateful if these identical letters could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/142

Security Council

Distr.: General
20 February 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instruction from my Government, I wish to refer to the identical letters dated 10 February 2018 from the representative of the Israeli regime addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council, containing allegations against my country (S/2018/111). While I categorically and unequivocally reject the misleading information and accusations contained in said letters, which state that the Islamic Republic of Iran deployed a drone to the occupied territories of Palestine, I wish to bring the following to your attention:

These accusations of the Israeli regime against Iran occur against the backdrop of the regime having been the primary source of instability in the region over the last seven decades due to its occupation and expansionist and destabilizing policies.

The frequent encroachments of this regime against the countries of the region, its regular violations of Syrian and Lebanese airspace and its airstrikes against various targets in Syria during the past few years are clear examples of the regime's destabilizing conduct. While Syria is fighting terrorist and extremist groups in its territory, these airstrikes effectively serve as air support for those groups. There is extensive documented evidence establishing the regime's military, financial and logistical support for these groups.

The reference to Security Council resolution 2231 (2015) in those letters is yet another attempt by the Israeli regime to weaken the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. The regime's destabilizing nature drove it to work tirelessly to undermine the nuclear negotiations from the very beginning. These destructive efforts have continued even since the Plan was agreed to and enshrined in a Council resolution.

On 17 February 2018, at the Munich Security Conference, Netanyahu threatened, once again, to attack "Iran itself". This is just the latest in an established pattern of malicious threats and belligerence that has come to define this regime's behaviour throughout its existence.

The Islamic Republic of Iran strongly calls upon the United Nations and the international community to confront this regime's expansionist policies and destructive actions. Any silence or passivity in the face of these actions will result in the deepening of the crises in the Middle East and the exacerbation of the region's current situation.

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I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/143

Security Council

Distr.: General
20 February 2018

Original: English

Special report of the Secretary-General on the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

I. Introduction

1. In line with my agenda on reforming the peace and security pillar of the United Nations, I directed the Under-Secretaries-General for Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support to undertake reviews of eight major peacekeeping operations by June 2018. The independent review of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) was conducted from November 2017 to January 2018 by an integrated team that included representatives of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and agencies, funds and programmes, and was led by an independent expert and former acting Under-Secretary General for Safety and Security, Kevin Kennedy. The team initially undertook a conflict analysis and consultations at Headquarters, before proceeding to South Sudan, where it received detailed briefings and held extensive consultations with UNMISS and the United Nations country team, the Transitional Government of National Unity, the diplomatic community and non-governmental organizations. The team also visited Addis Ababa and engaged with African Union officials and representatives from the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition, former detainees, the National Salvation Front and other political parties, as well as United Nations officials. In the first parts of the report I present and summarize the main findings of the review team, and in the final section I offer my observations and recommendations prior to the renewal of the mandate of UNMISS, on 15 March 2018.

2. The review process was focused on assessing five fundamental issues: the scope of the mandate and the validity of the assumptions underlying its current four pillars (protection of civilians, monitoring and reporting on human rights violations, creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance and support to the political process); the performance of the Mission in implementing its mandate and how it could be improved; the conditions for achieving a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan; possibilities for greater synergies among UNMISS, the United Nations country team and other international partners to achieve our common strategic objectives in South Sudan; and finally, how a viable exit strategy for the Mission would be defined.

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II. Evolution of the mandate of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan

3. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan was established on 8 July 2011 by the Security Council in its resolution 1996 (2011) of 8 July 2011. A strategic assessment conducted at the time identified the principal political and security risks for the newly created country to be the outstanding disputes with the Sudan resulting from the non-implementation of some of the provisions of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, as well as the threat posed by local rebellions, militias, poor governance in the management of oil revenue and the lack of cohesive national security institutions. Intercommunal violence was also identified as a major source of concern for the protection of civilians. Capacity-building and providing support to government institutions were considered essential to assisting in State-building, delivering public services and mitigating the risks of conflict. UNMISS was thus mandated to support extending state authority throughout the country, and to provide assistance to local state structures through the establishment of county support bases. Concurrently, the Council authorized a peacekeeping force with a ceiling of 7,000 military and 900 police personnel. Through my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, the United Nations also supported the African Union High-level Implementation Panel in addressing outstanding disputes between South Sudan and the Sudan.

4. Following the outbreak of violence in Juba in December 2013 between forces loyal to the President, Salva Kiir, and the former Vice-President, Riek Machar, the country progressively descended into a state of civil war. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) assumed the lead of the political negotiations to resolve the conflict, supported by my Special Envoy and UNMISS. The Government became a party to a bitter and extremely violent conflict, which included repeated atrocities committed against defenceless and vulnerable civilians. As a result of the increased fighting, in its resolution 2132 (2013) of 24 December 2013, the Security Council raised the Mission's troop ceiling to 12,500 troops with a more robust protection of civilians mandate. Subsequently, Council resolution 2155 (2014) of 27 May 2014 established the current four-pillar mandate and terminated the Mission's capacity-building tasks due to concerns that any assistance to the Government would indicate political support and could facilitate its war effort.

5. After 18 months of negotiations, the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (hereinafter referred to as peace agreement) was signed in August 2015 and was later complemented by further provisions regarding the transitional security arrangements, in October 2015. On 15 December 2015, the Security Council adopted resolution 2252 (2015), which raised the force levels of UNMISS up to a ceiling of 13,000 troops and 2,001 members of the police force, maintained the first three pillars of its mandate and revised the fourth pillar to add the provision of support to the implementation of the peace agreement. The mandate also included significant logistical and force protection support to the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism.

6. The outbreak of violence in July 2016 was further evidence of the continued unwillingness of the parties to resolve their disputes through peaceful means. To address the crisis and enable UNMISS to better protect civilians, the Security Council, through resolution 2304 (2016), once again raised the ceiling of the Mission to 17,000 troops, including, at the request of IGAD, a 4,000-strong regional protection force. The mandate of the regional protection force was specifically defined to improve security and protection of civilians in Juba, including to ensure movements at exit and entry points around Juba, contribute to security at the airport and secure key installations. The Government of South Sudan first opposed and then reluctantly

accepted the regional protection force deployment, criticizing the deployment as an attack against its sovereignty, motivated by a regime change agenda. As a result, the Government created serious impediments to the deployment of the regional protection force which has yet to be completed more than a year after its authorization.

III. Operating environment of United Nations Mission in South Sudan

7. Since May 2017, IGAD, supported by the African Union and the United Nations, has been working to revive the political process. A high-level revitalization forum on the peace agreement was convened on 18 December 2017 and delivered a new Cessation of Hostilities Agreement on 21 December. Since the new Cessation of Hostilities Agreement entered into force on 24 December 2017, it has been breached repeatedly by parties in various parts of the country. Should the high-level revitalization forum process succeed in producing a new momentum for the peace process, UNMISS could find itself in a significantly more positive operating environment, enabling the Mission to more easily fulfil its mandated tasks.

8. Violence and instability are, therefore, likely to remain prevalent throughout South Sudan, leading to more atrocities being committed against civilians and the flight of many more to neighbouring countries. There are now some 1.9 million people displaced within South Sudan, and more than 2 million refugees in neighbouring countries. More than 5.1 million people, nearly half the population, are severely food insecure. Additional conflict will also lead to more displacement and greater humanitarian needs and will further complicate the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

9. Meanwhile, the economic situation in South Sudan is expected to continue to deteriorate, owing to minimal revenue and sparse external support. The army and security agencies have not received salaries for several months. Criminality is increasing and adding to the prevailing insecurity. Civil servant arrears are accumulating and many public sector employees are no longer reporting for work. Juba continues to function as the only real monetized economy in the country, kept afloat largely by diplomatic, United Nations and international non-governmental organizations employment as well as diaspora remittances and private investments. In the World Bank assessment of the economy of South Sudan, an exceptionally bleak situation is predicted — with minimal governmental and institutional capacity, falling oil production and prices, contraction of the gross domestic product, an extreme poverty rate, rising food prices and falling food production, as well as high infant and maternal mortality rates. South Sudan is ranked 181 of 188 countries in the human development index. The survival of its population will, therefore, require massive levels of international assistance for the foreseeable future.

IV. Assessment of the Mission's current mandate, implementation and effectiveness

A. Protection of civilians

10. The dangerous security situation affecting civilians in South Sudan is a direct outcome of the leadership of the country's disregard for its responsibility to protect, even though protecting civilians is its primary responsibility. As a result, the protection of civilians is the most challenging aspect of the Mission's mandate. Tasks associated with the protection of civilians include deterrence, early warning, public safety and security of and within the protection of civilians sites, reaching out to as

many as possible of the nearly 2 million persons displaced throughout the country, preventing sexual and gender-based violence, addressing local conflicts and fostering a secure environment for the safe and voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees. The Mission is expected to protect civilians in a vast country with scarce infrastructure and a long rainy season, during which movement is largely restricted to transport by air. Since the outbreak of violence in December 2013, more than 200,000 internally displaced persons have sought refuge in UNMISS protection of civilians sites throughout the country, and 4 million others have been displaced, largely as a result of military operations, intercommunal violence and criminality. Even if political progress is made, fragmentation among the warring parties in South Sudan and the high risk of revenge killings imply that the protection crisis will likely continue; and the Mission must be prepared to respond accordingly.

11. Women and children continue to bear the brunt of the conflict. Gender-based violence is pervasive, yet underreported throughout South Sudan owing to social stigma and fear of retaliation by perpetrators. Life-saving services and reporting mechanisms are not immediately available to survivors in many of the affected areas. Conflict-related sexual violence is a serious concern. Women and girls, in particular those in female- and child-headed households, remain most at risk and are vulnerable to sexual assault while carrying out the most basic acts of survival. The Security Council has mandated that monitoring and reporting mechanisms continue to verify cases of child recruitment, use, abduction and other grave violations directly affecting some 100,000 children since the beginning of the conflict. More than 19,000 children are estimated to have been recruited and used by armed actors since the beginning of the conflict, up from an estimate of 17,000 in 2016. The destruction of schools and the departure of teachers from many affected areas have had an increasing impact on access to education, with 2 million children out of school.

12. It is in this challenging situation that UNMISS must chart a course to increase its protection of civilian activities to the maximum extent possible within its existing resources, and to find ways to work with the Government and other parties in order to do so. The Government will remain the main actor with whom the Mission needs to engage to bring about fundamental changes in the behaviour of the security forces. In that regard, the Mission's strategy to foster "more peace at any level" is the appropriate course of action among a limited range of options.

13. The operation of the protection of civilians sites continues to dominate the related activities of UNMISS. By a conservative estimate, 50 per cent of the Mission's efforts, in time, money, staffing and energy, are devoted to managing and protecting those sites. At least 5 of the 12 infantry battalions are engaged in protection of civilians site security, as are five formed police units and nearly 400 individual police officers. The review team found that while the vast majority of the people in the protection of civilians sites are there for their physical protection, the sites present their own sets of problems. Some sites have become highly politicized, characterized by the activities of competing gangs and the smuggling of contraband goods as well as a level of criminality that is extremely difficult to manage without adequate resources, notwithstanding sustained efforts to improve security. The sites also remain a point of friction with the Government, which claims that they provide refuge to elements of the armed opposition. Notwithstanding UNMISS efforts, sexual and gender-based violence remain a serious problem at the sites, where, in some cases, approximately 80 per cent of the population is made up of women and children. Managing and providing for humanitarian needs within these sites, a collective effort shared by the Mission and the humanitarian community, is also a major undertaking.

14. The protection of civilians sites have been and will remain the responsibility of the Mission until the hosted population feels safe enough to return home. The physical protection provided in the protection of civilians sites is at the core of the UNMISS

mandate and is being accomplished, notwithstanding the many challenges. Efforts are under way to better secure and police the sites, with weapons-free zones being established around their perimeters, more frequent weapons sweeps being undertaken, larger berms being built and increasing cooperation among the Mission, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work in the sites. Nevertheless, despite a substantial investment in securing the sites, they remain vulnerable to large-scale attacks, as witnessed in Bor in 2014 and Malakal in 2016. While the Mission is making a significant effort to locate and expel members of the armed opposition in the protection of civilians sites, such attacks remain a possibility if opposition figures continue to live in these sites and their populations are perceived to be supportive of the opposition. The provision of permanent security to protection of civilians sites reduces the Mission's ability to project its force outside United Nations bases and maintain a presence in areas in which the vast majority of the people in need of protection reside, or to which they have been displaced.

15. There are no easy answers to this dilemma. There will never be enough troops to protect both the protection of civilians sites and extend the protection footprint of UNMISS to other areas of large displacements, in a country as large as South Sudan. Increasing the effectiveness of protection efforts beyond the protection of civilians sites is a major priority of the Mission, though, and more emphasis is being placed by the Mission on early warning, greater involvement of the communities inside the camps in ensuring security and greater reliance on traditional dispute resolution practices. Efforts on the part of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Force Commander to make the Force more robust, nimble and proactive, in particular by projecting their protection activities beyond the sites, are beginning to make an impact. Plans are in place to expand the Mission's presence to include locations in the Equatorias, which have experienced intense fighting and displacement in the past year.

16. Nevertheless, with approximately 50 per cent of the military resources deployed in securing the protection of civilians sites, only a maximum of 20 per cent of troop strength is available for outward projection of force, supporting humanitarian operations and other mandated tasks; the remainder are being utilized to secure United Nations bases and support activities. Within existing resources, an increase in the percentage of forces available to provide some measure of protection to an estimated 1.7 million internally displaced persons who are not in protection of civilians sites can only occur through two avenues: (a) by sequentially closing the protection of civilians sites as the security situation improves and internally displaced persons voluntarily depart; and (b) by reassessing the current model of providing security to protection of civilians sites in order to explore whether other options exist, requiring fewer troops for static security in order to increase the Mission's footprint outwards. An optimal strategy would be a combination of the two. However, since the closure of protection of civilians sites depends on external factors that are out of the Mission's control, the reassessment of the current security model vis-à-vis the protection of civilians sites is essential. Some early success in closing sites has been achieved. The protection of civilians site in Melut was closed after registering the residents as internally displaced persons, providing a transition package and assurances of continued food assistance, while relocating some families with safety concerns to another site. The lessons learned in Melut will help in addressing the closure of larger sites in due course.

17. While the physical protection of civilians under imminent threat of violence is a mandated responsibility of UNMISS, the entire United Nations presence in South Sudan and NGO partners also have complementary protection responsibilities. While all the organizations appear to be seized of the importance of protection and have their respective strategies, it does not automatically translate into a joined up,

comprehensive approach that draws upon all the parties' strengths to best utilize scarce resources.

18. An integrated and people-focused United Nations protection approach is needed in South Sudan so as to enhance protection for the vulnerable, especially women and children. A system-wide approach would need to address, for example, the needs of displaced persons for immediate physical protection and humanitarian assistance to eventual safe and voluntary returns to their places of origin or choice. That approach should also be aimed at filling existing gaps, generating synergies and avoiding duplication of effort and any possible related waste of resources.

Regional protection force

19. The regional protection force was mandated by Security Council resolution 2304 (2016) at the request of States members of IGAD and in response to the July 2016 violence in Juba. The two main troop-contributing countries of the force, which contributed one infantry battalion each, are States members of IGAD involved in supporting and facilitating the peace process, while the third is actively participating in the process. Given its mandate and the specific tasking by the Security Council, the regional protection force was also configured to include its own enablers, which comprise attack helicopters, two high-readiness companies, a level II hospital, two engineering companies and one unmanned aerial vehicle unit.

20. According to the review team, since the Security Council adopted resolution 2304 (2016) on 12 August 2016, the security conditions in the capital have changed substantially. Sixteen months ago, the operating environment in Juba was insecure, owing to the persistent threat of military conflict. Today, while the risk of instability and violence remains, the threat of military conflict in Juba city has diminished considerably because the Government is now largely in control of the capital, and the likelihood of a major external threat to Juba remains low. The current environment in Juba, therefore, necessitates the adjustment of some elements of the regional protection force mandate as currently scripted. Moreover, it is expected that the high-level revitalization forum will address the requirement for new security arrangements and that UNMISS would be expected to support such arrangements. As a result, the concept, mandate and configuration of the regional protection force might require review so that it can adapt to the current political and security environment and provide the most appropriate contribution to the protection of civilians and support to the implementation of the agreement on the revised transitional security arrangements, once agreed upon by all parties.

Capacity-building in support of protection of civilians

21. South Sudan came into being with extremely limited institutional capacity in all areas of governance and government services with the exception of military forces. This situation has not improved in subsequent years. Poor governance and economic collapse have compromised the already weak rule of law institutions in the country. Civil servants, the national police and judicial actors have not been paid in months. The complete collapse of an already weak institutional framework is a big risk for a country and does not bode well for the future safety and security of civilians.

22. While a broad range of interlocutors — including from civil society, the donor community and UNMISS — recommended to the review team that the Mission resume some form of capacity-building activity, others recommended against an extensive re-entry into that area. The Government has advocated a reversion to the original 2011 mandate, which included full-fledged State- and capacity-building, but under Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations. In the current environment, a full-scale return to supporting State-building through capacity-building is not

warranted. There is, however, space for a careful and conditional increase in the role of UNMISS in providing technical assistance, support and advice to South Sudanese offices in areas that will directly advance the core pillars of the mandate. Such assistance would need to mitigate the risk of UNMISS contributing to the conflict, would be subject to a review of human rights due diligence policy on United Nations support to non-United Nations security forces where applicable, and should be done in close collaboration with the United Nations country team so as to avoid a duplication of efforts.

23. Potential areas for technical assistance, training or advice include the training of the South Sudan National Police Service, the Joint Integrated Police, if reconstituted by the high-level revitalization forum, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in matters relating to international humanitarian law and support for the investigation and prosecution of sexual and gender-based violence, sexual violence in conflict and other significant human rights violations. In addition, advocacy and outreach towards rebel groups on these issues could be conducted. Much can be done in many of these areas under the current mandate, if Mission leadership is given the flexibility to move resources within existing budget lines.

24. Offering training in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence and human rights is not only useful but would also be a good test of how serious SPLA leadership is about improving the conduct, standards and accountability of its military forces. In that respect, the overall behaviour of the security forces can only fundamentally change with a long-term security sector reform programme. In the current climate, initiating a security sector reform programme would be premature. However, security sector reform efforts would need to be undertaken as part of a political settlement of the conflict, because without such reform, the long-term outlook for the political and security situation in the country is unlikely to change. The project would also need to be led by resourceful donors, because the United Nations alone does not possess the wherewithal to take charge of such an endeavour.

Military and police performance

25. The Mission has saved and continues to save the lives of tens of thousands of civilians in South Sudan. In the review, it was concluded, however, that the quality of response to a protection of civilians challenge or incident greatly depended on the quality of the military or police contingent and its commander. While dedicated investigations have been conducted in response to the most severe incidents of unsatisfactory performance, existing formal mechanisms for assessing the performance of a troop- or police-contributing country have been unsatisfactory. In view of various incidents concerning a lack of performance or a disregard for orders of the Force Commander, it is clear that the current systems need improvement. Some incidents are not reported, or remedial action is not taken, owing primarily to self-censorship within the Force or political sensitivities vis-à-vis the troop- and police-contributing countries.

26. A revised and independent appraisal system is needed with a view to ensuring effective and well-equipped troops to more efficiently implement the mandates while also enhancing the safety and security of peacekeepers. In that regard, the Office of Military Affairs is working to develop a more effective unit performance evaluation tool to evaluate the performance of contingents. Action must be taken against units and commanders who have been found to be in dereliction of their mandate.

Mission leadership and field offices

27. The review team found that my Special Representative and his team have demonstrated strong leadership in providing a clear vision of the Mission's priorities with an outcome-oriented approach. The operational concept devised by UNMISS is aimed at ensuring that all activities undertaken by the Mission include a clear goal at the outset and support the Mission's priorities. While a work in progress, this approach has altered the status quo and sharpened the focus of leaders and managers on the analysis of their operations and what they are or are not achieving.

28. Part of this strategy is a recognition of the importance of the field offices in UNMISS operations. More authority is being delegated to the field both to promote quicker responses to emerging situations as well as to provide each office the latitude to address local issues. This is particularly important for the role that the field offices play in mediating local disputes that threaten peace and stability. These subnational reconciliation efforts, which can involve workshops, conferences and mediation efforts led by the local Head of Office, have had a direct impact on mitigating and alleviating intercommunal tensions. Recent successful engagements include a de-escalation of tensions between the Bor Dinka and Murle communities in Jonglei and Boma and an early Murle mediation process in Boma. Absent a larger political settlement at the national and regional levels, these efforts are invaluable in mitigating conflict and violence at the subnational level.

B. Monitoring, investigating and reporting on the human rights situation

29. The Mission has been mandated to monitor, investigate and report on human rights violations and abuses, as well as violations of international humanitarian law. The Security Council tasked UNMISS with paying particular attention to conflict-related sexual violence and violations and abuses against children, as well as monitoring incidents of hate speech and incitement to violence. The human rights mandate of the Mission is inextricably linked to its protection of civilians function and should contribute to early warning efforts.

30. Human rights violations in South Sudan continue as a consequence of the conflict. The extreme cruelty of attacks against civilians has caused mass displacement on an unprecedented scale. The conflict has also spread to previously peaceful regions of the country and exacerbated ethnic tensions. The full extent of conflict-related sexual violence in the country remains unclear, but it is decidedly one of the prominent features of the crisis. Grave violations against the rights of children, including child recruitment and use, also continue unabated.

31. Despite the deplorable human rights situation in South Sudan, and the resources available to the Mission, public reporting of violations has been relatively scarce and slow. While recognizing that difficulties have been encountered in collecting human rights information (surveillance, intimidation of potential witnesses, fear of reprisals and constant access restrictions), more must be done to expose the full scale of human rights violations in the country through accurate, strategic and timely monitoring and reporting. Ensuring more systematic and detailed documentation of conflict-related violations will assist in identifying patterns and systems of abuse, contribute to the Mission's analysis of the conflict and its toll on civilians and inform its protection of civilians responses. It will also help in pinpointing responsibility for violations of human rights and of international humanitarian law in particular. This need is fully recognized by the Mission's leadership, which has embarked on a major reorganization of the structure, operating procedures and reporting of the Mission's Human Rights Division with the support of the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights. The effort is now under way and is expected to be completed by March 2018.

32. A particularly egregious feature of the human rights situation in South Sudan is that human rights defenders and journalists are subjected to constant surveillance and harassment. They operate in a climate of fear, often finding themselves under threat or risk of being arbitrarily detained, or forced into exile. In order to prevent the further erosion of democracy in the country, the protection of civic space should be reinforced as one of the main priorities of the Mission. Work in that area would include the protection of civil society actors under threat and the prevention of the additional deterioration of freedom of expression in the country. The recent release of several political prisoners, as part of the Government's national dialogue process, provides opportunities for the Mission to advocate with the authorities regarding the need to create a more permissive and democratic environment for human rights work and discussions of issues of public interest. This is particularly important at a time when the Government is increasingly expressing its intention to push ahead with truth-seeking and reconciliation processes, as well as with the organization of elections in the country.

33. The Mission faces significant constraints in implementing its human rights mandate owing to access restrictions imposed by state security forces, in particular in areas in which grave human rights violations are reported and in those controlled by the opposition, to which the Government restricts access. Surveillance and a lack of security also make it difficult for the Mission to interview witnesses, victims and survivors of such violations without putting them at risk. On some occasions, UNMISS has been able to collect testimonies from survivors and witnesses in neighbouring countries, but access to such populations occurs only on an ad hoc basis. Restrictions on the Mission's human rights and other activities are routinely reported to the Security Council as violations of the Status of Forces Agreement. The review team found that, to date, those reports have not elicited any collective response from the Council and there is a strong need for the Council to react to the reports more vigorously and seek the compliance of the Government of South Sudan with the Agreement.

34. State security forces are responsible for a disproportionately large part of the violations of human rights and international humanitarian law recorded by UNMISS, and they currently pose the single biggest threat to the protection of civilians in the country. A Mission-wide strategy aimed at identifying channels through which the authorities and parties to the conflict can be held accountable for those violations and abuses, including for conflict-related sexual violence, is lacking. Without such an approach, the Mission will fail to address the main threats to civilians and neglect to strengthen accountability for past crimes to deter further large-scale human rights abuses in the country. In the current environment, the prospects for accountability remain weak and, in the assessment of the review team, the Hybrid Court for South Sudan seems to be the only viable option, given its acceptance by both the Government and the opposition. The Hybrid Court may, however, be insufficient to address the full spectrum and urgency of accountability needs in South Sudan.

C. Creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance

35. The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is grim. The compounding effects of widespread violence and sustained economic decline have further diminished the capacity of people to face threats to their health, safety and livelihoods. Humanitarian organizations predict that at least 7 million people throughout South Sudan will

require some form of humanitarian assistance in 2018, that is to say, over 60 per cent of the population. Moreover, 60 per cent of those in need are children. The Greater Equatorias, the traditional breadbasket of the country, are now beset by conflict, severely restricting the country's ability to produce its own food and potentially affecting the main supply routes from Kenya and Uganda.

36. While the humanitarian crisis deepens, the operating environment for humanitarian agencies is becoming increasingly complex and dangerous. Notwithstanding a November 2017 Presidential order granting unrestricted access, humanitarian actors face a range of factors that limit it: security conditions, impassable roads and blockage by armed forces at the local level on the part of both SPLA and opposition factions, as well as administrative impediments. Aid workers continue to be killed, injured and harassed throughout the country. At least 92 aid workers have been killed since the beginning of the crisis in December 2013, including 25 who were killed in 2017. While the review team was in South Sudan, another 6 NGO workers were killed in an attack on the village of Duk Payuel, in Jonglei.

37. The Mission's assistance to humanitarian partners includes the provision of security at UNMISS protection of civilians sites and, upon request, the provision of air transport, extraction/relocation support, route and area security through long-range patrols or escorts, and the exchange of information about security conditions, access negotiation and coordination with armed forces. Mine action teams survey and clear routes, airstrips and locations for the delivery of aid and provide updated hazard mapping to allow free and safe movement of humanitarian organizations and affected populations. More than 600 United Nations agency and NGO staff currently co-locate in UNMISS bases and the Mission also secures warehouses, fuel supplies and other critical infrastructure in conflict areas. While 95 per cent of humanitarian movements are conducted without armed escort, agencies call upon the Mission for armed escorts in particularly dangerous areas. However, there remain areas that are inaccessible to both the Mission and humanitarian actors.

38. Humanitarian representatives in South Sudan noted that the Mission's coordination with and responsiveness to humanitarian organizations' requests has improved markedly in the past year. One challenge for the Mission is that many humanitarian organizations, in particular NGOs, operate in areas in which the United Nations has an infrequent presence, or none at all. A planned expansion of UNMISS into Equatoria will partially fill this gap and increase the Mission's ability to further support humanitarian operations. As a result of this improved collaboration, the Mission is receiving more requests for various types of support, which it has been able to meet thus far.

39. Humanitarian organizations and donors have strongly praised UNMISS for its efforts to create conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and recommended against any changes to this aspect of the Mission's mandate. UNMISS has been characterized as a key enabler of the massive humanitarian operation and essential to humanitarian actors delivering aid. The support of the Mission and the Mine Action Service in mine action, in particular, has been praised. The review team found that, without the presence and support of UNMISS, the access and reach of humanitarian organizations would be reduced considerably, in particular in the conflict areas in which they reside in UNMISS camps and in locations in which UNMISS secures warehouses, fuel supplies and other critical infrastructure.

D. Support to the political process

40. The main factor determining the ability of UNMISS to fulfil its mandate and eventual exit strategy is progress in the political process towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict. If no sustained progress is made on the political front, the Mission is likely to have to continue to implement the other three pillars of its mandate for a significant and indefinite period of time. Yet, the key factors for the success of the political process are not in the hands of the Mission.

41. The implementation of the peace agreement fell apart in July 2016 owing primarily to a lack of political will on the part of the parties to implement the agreement in good faith and to their preference for achieving political objectives through military means. The review team assessed that the conflict in South Sudan could not have been sustained for this long without a steady resupply chain of weapons and ammunition to the parties, notably the Government, enabled by some of its neighbouring countries. It found that this has directly affected the safety of United Nations personnel and the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate, and advised that unless these dynamics change, and the neighbours of South Sudan provide consistent, coherent, concerted and unequivocal support to the peace process, including through disabling the parties' ability to procure weapons and ammunition, the peace process is unlikely to succeed.

42. The launch by IGAD of the high-level revitalization forum on 18 December was the most significant peace-related development since 2015. Following three days of intense negotiations between a wide cross-section of opposition actors and the Government, a Cessation of Hostilities Agreement was signed on 21 December 2017. Under the Agreement, parties were obligated to cease all hostile military actions and operations as from 24 December 2017, including attacks against civilians and humanitarian actors, and to facilitate unfettered humanitarian access. The agreement also includes a clause regarding the release of children recruited by armed groups and the release of detained persons. The forum provided the first opportunity for the signatories of the peace agreement and newly emerged political forces to meet under one roof.

43. There have been reports of clashes in multiple locations in South Sudan since the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement came into effect. These have been concentrated mainly in areas in which fighting was ongoing prior to the Agreement entering into force, such as Western and Central Equatoria and Unity. The review team noted that the entire period has also been characterized by media propaganda, through which each side accuses the other of attacks and violations of the Agreement. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism has attributed the responsibility for the clashes to both SPLA and the Sudan People's Liberation Army in Opposition. Maintaining a genuine cessation of hostilities will depend largely on the effectiveness of the Mechanism in performing its duties, and on the freedom of movement of UNMISS. The Mission should therefore enhance its support to the Mechanism's proactive monitoring and reporting of violations and overall effectiveness in identifying those responsible.

44. Reporting on ceasefire violations by the Monitoring Mechanism should be shared more rapidly with the Security Council, in order to inform its deliberations and put urgently needed pressure on the parties to cease such violations. As expressed by the IGAD Council of Ministers and other regional leaders during the African Union summit held in Addis Ababa in 2018, unless a political cost and accountability measures are attached to these violations, they are likely to continue.

45. During the second phase of the high-level revitalization forum, which began on 5 February, discussions have been focused on issues of governance, a permanent

ceasefire and transitional security arrangements as well as on revised timelines for the implementation of the peace agreement of 2015. That will also include revised timelines and implementation schedules towards democratic elections at the end of the transitional period.

46. While the initial progress in the high-level revitalization forum process is encouraging, the chances of reaching a comprehensive political solution in the near term without applying political leverage on the parties are slim. The Government of South Sudan perceives itself to be in a dominant position and has voiced strong reservations regarding the IGAD approach. The opposition is fragmented and internally divided. South Sudan has also become a flashpoint where regional geopolitical tensions and competition converge, further undermining prospects for peace. If the high-level revitalization forum results in the conclusion of a political agreement, the implementation process will require a stronger monitoring and implementation mechanism on the ground.

47. There is a clear imperative for the United Nations and the wider international community to continue to pursue peace in South Sudan. The crisis will not be resolved absent a political solution. The review team assessed that the current military dominance of the Transitional Government of National Unity may not be sustained in a context of economic collapse and internal fragmentation, and government engagement aimed at incremental improvements on the ground will not be sufficient to reverse the current dynamics of the crisis. The team is of the view that generating support for the high-level revitalization forum, resisting the pressure of unrealistic timelines, bringing the region on board in a coherent and united approach and highlighting the great importance of unity of purpose within the Security Council are the most important steps towards peace in South Sudan.

V. Observations and recommendations

48. I believe that progress in the peace process, leading to a sustainable political resolution of the conflict, should be the key objective of the United Nations in South Sudan, as that is the only way towards a viable exit strategy for UNMISS. In the past, the Security Council has prioritized increasing the troop strength of the Mission, rather than strengthening the political process. As a result, UNMISS evolved from an enabling instrument to one mainly focused on the protection of civilians. Thus, I encourage the Security Council to continue exerting increased political leverage on the parties, in coordination with regional organizations, and to address the restrictions placed on the Mission, as well as the repeated violations of the Status of Forces Agreement.

49. The Mission was established in 2011, with a focus on the consolidation of peace and security and assisting the new Government in developing institutions and its capacity. UNMISS remains a necessary presence in South Sudan, without which tens of thousands of South Sudanese would face dire and dangerous circumstances. In this environment of conflict, supporting humanitarian access, as well as monitoring of and publicly reporting on human rights and humanitarian law violations, are important supporting elements of the Mission's protection mandate.

50. The Status of Forces Agreement is frequently violated and these violations are regularly reported to the Security Council. The Mission continues to work with the Government to move it towards a peaceful and helpful approach while simultaneously doing its maximum to protect a significant portion of the population.

51. Current trends indicate that the political process will require a considerable amount of time, effort and united political support from the Security Council in order

for it to deliver an implementable outcome, as the process must overcome a security situation, which in the absence of a resolution is very likely to see a resumption of violence; a dire human rights situation, where impunity for violations against civilians in general and against women and children in particular will continue; and a humanitarian situation, which is likely to worsen. In the light of these circumstances, it is my view that the current mandate of UNMISS remains valid and should be extended for another year, albeit with some modifications as recommended in the paragraphs below.

52. While the current language on the Mission's protection of civilians mandate remains valid, there is a need to adopt a system-wide United Nations protection approach for South Sudan, drawing on all capacities — those of the military, the police, civilians and United Nations agencies — to ensure better integration and coordination of efforts. This approach should not only utilize to the maximum extent possible all United Nations resources in South Sudan, but also fill existing gaps and avoid duplication of activities. This can only happen if we overcome the challenge of United Nations actors working in silos, which is an issue that I am addressing in my reforms. I have directed the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNMISS to conduct a military and police capability study, to review the current model for providing security to the protection of civilians sites and to explore whether a more efficient model requiring fewer troops could be contemplated with the overall aim of freeing up more troops for outward projection of the Mission's military footprint.

53. The mandate of UNMISS could be amended to include the capacity-building and training of security and government institutions in matters relating to international humanitarian law, and the investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, as well as of other serious human rights violations, with due reference to the implementation of the human rights due diligence policy. A Mission-wide strategy aimed at identifying channels through which those responsible can be held accountable for violations and abuses, in particular for sexual and gender-based violence and conflict-related sexual violence, should be urgently developed. Consideration should also be given to community violence-reduction projects. All this could be achieved within existing resources, provided that my Special Representative is given the authority to reallocate resources towards these objectives.

54. In order to raise the visibility of the human rights situation in South Sudan, the Mission should strengthen its outreach and advocacy aimed at reducing violations and enhancing the protection of civilians, including through documenting responsibility as a deterrent, as well as a basis for future accountability. There should also be a renewed international push to support the efforts of the African Union towards the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, which was agreed to by the parties to the conflict. The language in the mandate related to creating conditions conducive to the delivery of humanitarian assistance remains valid, and its successful implementation deserves recognition.

55. I commend the engagement of IGAD to revitalize the political process, and urge the region to make further efforts to overcome its divisions in order to reach a political solution to the crisis in South Sudan. I urge the Security Council to continue supporting the peace process, including by taking into account the call by the African Union and IGAD to hold the parties accountable for the violations of their own agreements. Without regional and international leverage, the parties to the conflict are unlikely to change their existing calculus and to support political dialogue. I urge the States members of IGAD and members of the Council to ensure consistent and unequivocal messages to the parties in that respect and to strengthen their political support for the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and UNMISS in

addressing the violations of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement and the Status of Forces Agreement.

56. In conclusion, I would like to thank the UNMISS review team and its leader, Kevin Kennedy, for their excellent work. I would also like to thank my Special Representative, David Shearer, UNMISS leadership and staff as well as members of the United Nations country team in South Sudan for their hard work under very trying circumstances.

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Letter dated 21 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith information bulletins from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic for the period 17–20 February 2018 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) V. **Nebenzia**

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Annex to the letter dated 21 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (17 February 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 12 incidents of gunfire.

The Turkish representative office has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Damascus Governorate and two in Idlib Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours, the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Bunduqah, Aleppo Governorate. Food with a total weight of 1.1 tons was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,754 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,456.6 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 62 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 70,815 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, a ceasefire agreement has been signed with Jubb al-A'amah in Aleppo Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,362.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (18 February 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 13 incidents of gunfire.

The Turkish representative office has reported four incidents of gunfire: two in Hama Governorate and two in Idlib Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,754 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,456.6 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 50 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 70,865 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

No ceasefire agreements have been signed with populated areas over the past 24 hours.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process is unchanged — it is still 2,362.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (19 February 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 15 incidents of gunfire in the following Governorates: seven in Damascus, five in Ladhiqiyah and three in Aleppo.

The Turkish representative office has reported three incidents of gunfire: two in Homs Governorate and one in Damascus Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

Over the past 24 hours the Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out one humanitarian operation in Husayniyah, Dayr al-Zawr Governorate. Food with a total weight of 1.9 tons was delivered to the local population.

In total, 1,755 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,458.5 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 52 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 70,917 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, a ceasefire agreement has been signed with Jabriyah in Hama Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,363.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

Information bulletin from the Russian Federation Ministry of Defence regarding the status of implementation of the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas (20 February 2018)

Observance of the ceasefire regime

Monitoring groups have continued to monitor observance of the ceasefire regime as part of implementing the Memorandum on the creation of de-escalation areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, signed by the Russian Federation, the Republic of Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran on 4 May 2017.

The situation in the de-escalation areas has been assessed as stable.

The Russian representative office of the Russian and Turkish Joint Commission reviewing issues related to violations of the ceasefire regime has reported 18 incidents of gunfire.

The Turkish representative office has reported nine incidents of gunfire: six in Damascus Governorate and three in Hama Governorate.

Most of the incidents of small arms being fired indiscriminately have been reported in areas controlled by fighters of the Nusrah Front terrorist group.

Provision of humanitarian aid to the population of the Syrian Arab Republic

The Centre for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides in the Syrian Arab Republic has not carried out any humanitarian operations over the past 24 hours.

In total, 1,755 humanitarian operations have been carried out.

The total weight of humanitarian cargo delivered is 2,458.5 tons.

The safe passage of one United Nations humanitarian convoy was assured to Tall Shihab in Dar'a Governorate. The total weight of cargo delivered was 136 tons.

Over the past 24 hours, medical assistance has been provided to 56 persons.

In total, medical assistance has been provided to 70,973 persons.

Reconciliation of opposing sides

Over the past 24 hours, a ceasefire agreement has been signed with Timuzah in Hama Governorate.

The number of populated areas that have joined the reconciliation process has increased to 2,364.

The number of armed groups that have announced their commitment to accepting and fulfilling the terms of the ceasefire is unchanged — it is still 234.

United Nations S/2018/145

Security Council

Distr.: General
21 February 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 21 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Upon instruction from my Government, and with regard to the final report of the Panel of Experts on Yemen, dated 26 January 2018 (S/2018/68), I have the honour to bring the following to your attention:

1. The Islamic Republic of Iran categorically rejects all allegations contained in the above-mentioned report and reiterates that the findings and assessment by the Panel, with regard to implementation of paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015), fail to render an impartial and objective assessment of the issues at hand. My Government re-emphasizes that it neither has a policy nor seeks to transfer arms or military equipment in Yemen or manufacture them therein.

2. Despite the fact that Security Council resolution 2216 (2015) is not a balanced document and fails to acknowledge realities in Yemen, the Islamic Republic of Iran has undertaken to comply with its provisions. In this regard, certain directives have been issued to relevant authorities, including those responsible for trade control.

3. The Panel of Experts, in its function, did not observe the rules of methodology, thus failing to take a professional and impartial approach in its fact-finding activities in order to draw conclusions on certain issues. Further, there is serious doubt regarding the authenticity and credibility of the Panel's assessment. Overall, the Panel has failed to fully comply with the relevant fact-finding requirements. It is a well-established rule of international law that such a claim against a sovereign State requires a degree of certainty that the Panel failed to reach. In particular, the Panel's report fails even to comply with the methodological standards elaborated in different phrases in the annex to Security Council document S/2006/997, inter alia in paragraphs 21–23, 25, 27 and 28.

4. The Islamic Republic of Iran firmly believes that, in this case, the Panel should have considered, as a preliminary step, the admissibility of the evidence from a State that is party to the conflict. Moreover, the reliability and probative values of the evidence are questionable on many reasonable grounds, including those listed above. The liberal approach taken by the Panel vis-à-vis the allegations would encourage more fabrications of allegations for political purposes. Accordingly, not only did the Panel fail to restore peace and security in the region, but also created a hurdle to the possibility of any political solution in the future.

5. Applying a strikingly inaccurate fact-finding procedure and delivering an unfounded assessment by the Panel is an attempt to pursue the intentional agenda of certain countries to distract the international community from realities in Yemen and

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the catastrophic humanitarian situation that has resulted from the relentless and brutal attacks by the Saudi-led coalition.

6. The Islamic Republic of Iran has demonstrated its determination to cooperate with the Panel to clarify certain issues, in particular through close contact of its Permanent Mission with the United Nations or by responding to the correspondence of the members of the Panel and receiving its technical delegation in Iran. However, it seems that the Panel has moved towards the opposite direction from the final report. In its recent visit to Tehran, and in addition to some bilateral meetings with the officials of the Foreign Ministry and the Deputy of the Supreme National Security Council of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Panel of Experts had two joint working sessions with our technical experts during their two-day visit to Tehran on 15 and 16 January 2018. Our experts examined all issues contained in the letters delivered by the Panel of Experts and raised their professional and technical responses and views in a highly cooperative and constructive approach.

7. Unfortunately, despite the transparent and comprehensive technical specifications by our experts in the joint meetings, the Panel of Experts made an unprofessional and questionable request to visit the Iranian missile named Qiam-1 in order to observe and examine its structure and characteristics, a request that leaves no choice for any sovereign State other than to reject it.

8. According to the technical examinations by our experts, almost all references to the non-apparent characteristics of the Qiam-1, including those related to the effective range, warhead weight, internal design features, internal fuelling system and navigation system, cited in paragraph 90 (a) and (b) of the report and in annex 36, tables 36.3 and 36.4 and section V, etc., are erroneous. Meanwhile, the Panel has failed to provide reliable sources for these speculations. It is worthy of note that evidence projected by the violations of international law and the rules of methodology has no probative value. All other claims, including similarities between logos found on components and trademarks belonging to certain military industries in Iran, are inaccurate and flawed.

9. The Panel, on the basis of fabricated evidence and information provided by the Saudi Arabian regime and citing some non-exclusive apparent features of 2 out of 82 missiles allegedly launched from Yemeni territories targeting Saudi Arabia, has tried to link these two missiles to Iran's Qiam-1 short-range ballistic missile family. It is worth mentioning that, technically, the engine and the platform of the Qiam-1 missile do not have the capability to increase the range. It is also surprising to use the phrase "family" for the Qiam-1 missile, as this missile is unique and does not have other versions.

10. In each and every claim, including the alleged transfer of missile components to Yemen, in addition to "technical matching of components", substantiated information regarding "the exact time of transfer" and "the available routes" must be clearly furnished. In this context, the assessments by the Panel lack logical merit. Due to the imposed all-round blockade and given the sensitivity, heavy weight and large size of the parts (including the launcher, oxidizer tank, etc.) and the technical difficulty of re-aligning and coaxializing disassembled parts, there are serious doubts regarding the veracity of the claim made by Saudi Arabia, the United States and the Panel that the missiles and their related items had external origins that were supplied through unconventional routes.

11. There are also conflicts and contradictions between the statements and positions provided by the Saudi Arabian authorities and those delivered by the Panel with regard to the strike or interception of missiles. The qualities of the retrieved missile components contradict the assertion about intercepting and destroying the missile by missile defence systems, an issue that should be clarified.

12. On the basis of open source information, prior to the onset of hostilities and adoption of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), the Yemeni Government had considerable potentials in the field of ballistic missiles and notable stockpiles of short-range ballistic missiles, including ScudCB, and -C, Hwasong 5, and -6, Borkan-1, Ghaher-1, etc., that could have been utilized by its local expertise as technical bases for further upgrades. Meanwhile, the accusations levelled by Saudi Arabia against Iran are aimed at distracting United Nations Member States and public opinion from the Saudi military invasion of and massive criminal acts against the oppressed people of Yemen.

13. The Panel, in paragraph 90 (i) of its report, has claimed that, as it has not provided any information to the Panel on any change of custody of the components for the building of extended-range short-range ballistic missiles, the country is in non-compliance with paragraph 14 of resolution 2216 (2015). It is an exceedingly unprofessional and politically-oriented approach by the Panel to accuse the Islamic Republic of Iran of being non-compliant with paragraph 14 of the resolution because of "not providing information to the Panel". Contrary to the assertion in footnote 118, this Mission never received a letter from the Panel regarding this finding on 15 December 2017. Communications from the Panel around that date were mostly related to activities of specific companies wherein the Panel chose to ignore Iran's replies. In fact, this finding was first known through leaked media reports and, in other words, was finalized without duly communicating with Iran. Nevertheless, the Panel is not in a position or mandated to decide on the state of compliance by a United Nations Member State with a Security Council resolution.

14. While violating Security Council resolution 2216 (2015), the Saudi Arabian regime, backed by the United States and the United Kingdom, is misusing provisions of the resolution to continue its brutal and unlawful aggression in Yemen. At the same time, the air, sea and land blockade imposed has devastated the lives of millions of people, destroyed the basic public infrastructures and facilities, displaced people and inflicted disease and famine. These criminal acts are tantamount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

15. Owing to the massive, indiscriminate aerial bombings and the blockade of Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition, which have exacerbated the humanitarian situation in Yemen, the Security Council has an urgent responsibility to take serious measures to counter the Saudis' criminal and adventurous policy in Yemen, hold the Saudi leadership accountable, alleviate the sufferings of the Yemeni people, remove the inhumane blockade, deliver humanitarian assistance and also have a fair as well as realistic initiative to find a peaceful solution for this crisis through a Yemeni-owned and Yemeni-led dialogue.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Gholamali **Khoshroo**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

United Nations S/2018/146

Security Council

Distr.: General
24 February 2018

Original: English

Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, France, Kuwait, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America: draft resolution

The Security Council,

Recalling its resolutions 2042 (2012), 2043 (2012), 2118 (2013), 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2175 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2209 (2015), 2235 (2015), 2249 (2015), 2254 (2015), 2258 (2015), 2268 (2016), 2286 (2016), 2332 (2016), 2336 (2016) and 2393 (2017), and its Presidential Statements of 3 August 2011 (S/PRST/2011/16), 21 March 2012 (S/PRST/2012/6), 5 April 2012 (S/PRST/2012/10), 2 October 2013 (S/PRST/2013/15), 24 April 2015 (S/PRST/2015/10) and 17 August 2015 (S/PRST/2015/15),

Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria, and to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations,

Reiterating its grave distress at the continued severity of the devastating humanitarian situation in Syria, including in Eastern Ghouta, Idlib Governorate, Northern Hama Governorate, Rukhban and Raqqa, and at the fact that urgent humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance, is now required by more than 13.1 million people in Syria, of whom 6.1 million are internally displaced, 2.5 million are living in hard-to-reach areas, including Palestinian refugees, and hundreds of thousands of civilians are trapped in besieged areas,

Expressing outrage at the unacceptable levels of violence escalating in several parts of the country, in particular in Idlib Governorate and Eastern Ghouta but also Damascus City, including shelling on diplomatic premises, and at attacks against civilians, civilian objects and medical facilities, further compounding suffering and displacing large numbers of people, *recalling* in this regard the legal obligations of all parties under international humanitarian law and international human rights law, as well as all relevant decisions of the Security Council, especially to cease all attacks against civilians and civilian objects, including those involving attacks on schools and medical facilities,

Expressing concern for those returning to areas, including those retaken from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), that are contaminated by explosive remnants of war and need resilience and stabilization support and *expressing disturbance* at the humanitarian situation in Raqqa,

Reiterating its deep disturbance at the lack of United Nations humanitarian access to besieged populations in recent months, *expressing* grave alarm at the dire

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situation of the hundreds of thousands of civilians trapped in besieged areas in the Syrian Arab Republic, especially in Eastern Ghouta, Yarmouk, Foua and Kefraya, and *reaffirming* that sieges directed against civilian populations in Syria are a violation of international humanitarian law, and *calling* for the immediate lifting of all sieges,

Expressing its disturbance at the humanitarian situation for the internally displaced persons in Rukhban and *stressing* in this regard the need to ensure humanitarian access to Rukhban from inside Syria and the need for a sustainable solution,

Noting the ongoing work on de-escalation areas to reduce violence as a step towards a comprehensive nation-wide ceasefire, *emphasizing* the need for all parties to respect their commitments to existing ceasefire agreements, and that humanitarian access must be granted as part of these efforts in accordance with international humanitarian law,

Reaffirming that Member States must ensure that any measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law,

Emphasizing that the humanitarian situation will continue to deteriorate further in the absence of a political solution to the Syrian conflict in line with resolution 2254 (2015), *calling upon* all parties to make progress in this regard and to undertake confidence-building measures, including the early release of any arbitrarily detained persons, particularly women and children,

Expressing outrage at the insufficient implementation of its resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2268 (2016), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017),

Determining that the devastating humanitarian situation in Syria continues to constitute a threat to peace and security in the region,

Underscoring that Member States are obligated under Article 25 of the Charter of the United Nations to accept and carry out the Council's decisions,

1. *Demands* that all parties cease hostilities without delay, and engage immediately to ensure full and comprehensive implementation of this demand by all parties, for a durable humanitarian pause for at least 30 consecutive days throughout Syria, to enable the safe, unimpeded and sustained delivery of humanitarian aid and services and medical evacuations of the critically sick and wounded, in accordance with applicable international law;

2. *Affirms* that the cessation of hostilities shall not apply to military operations against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as Da'esh), Al Qaeda and Al Nusra Front (ANF), and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al Qaeda or ISIL, and other terrorist groups, as designated by the Security Council;

3. *Calls upon* all parties to respect and fulfil their commitments to existing ceasefire agreements, including the full implementation of resolution 2268, furthermore *calls upon* all Member States to use their influence with the parties to ensure implementation of the cessation of hostilities, the fulfilment of existing commitments and to support efforts to create conditions for a durable and lasting ceasefire and *stresses* the need for relevant guarantees from those Member States;

4. *Calls upon* all relevant Member States to coordinate efforts to monitor the cessation of hostilities, building on existing arrangements;

5. *Further demands* that, immediately after the start of the cessation of hostilities, all parties shall allow safe, unimpeded and sustained access each week for

United Nations' and their implementing partners' humanitarian convoys, including medical and surgical supplies, to all requested areas and populations according to United Nations' assessment of need in all parts of Syria, in particular to those 5.6 million people in 1,244 communities in acute need, including the 2.9 million people in hard-to-reach and besieged locations, subject to standard UN security assessment;

6. *Demands moreover* that, immediately after the start of the cessation of hostilities, all parties shall allow the United Nations and its implementing partners to undertake safe, unconditional medical evacuations, based on medical need and urgency, subject to standard UN security assessment;

7. *Reiterates its demand*, reminding in particular the Syrian authorities, that all parties immediately comply with their obligations under international law, including international human rights law, as applicable, and international humanitarian law, including the protection of civilians as well as to ensure the respect and protection of all medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their means of transport and equipment, as well as hospitals and other medical facilities, and to fully and immediately implement all provisions of all relevant Security Council resolutions;

8. *Demands* that all parties facilitate safe and unimpeded passage for medical personnel and humanitarian personnel exclusively engaged in medical duties, their equipment, transport and supplies, including surgical items, to all people in need, consistent with international humanitarian law and *reiterates its demand* that all parties demilitarize medical facilities, schools and other civilian facilities and avoid establishing military positions in populated areas and desist from attacks directed against civilian objects;

9. *Takes note* with appreciation of the five requests identified by the Emergency Relief Coordinator on 11 January 2018 during his mission to Syria, and *calls* upon all parties to facilitate the implementation of these five requests and others to ensure principled, sustained and improved humanitarian assistance to Syria in 2018;

10. *Calls upon* all parties to immediately lift the sieges of populated areas, including in Eastern Ghouta, Yarmouk, Foua and Kefraya, and *demands* that all parties allow the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including medical assistance, cease depriving civilians of food and medicine indispensable to their survival, and enable the rapid, safe and unhindered evacuation of all civilians who wish to leave, and *underscores* the need for the parties to agree on humanitarian pauses, days of tranquillity, localized ceasefires and truces to allow humanitarian agencies safe and unhindered access to all affected areas in Syria, recalling that starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited by international humanitarian law;

11. *Calls for* humanitarian mine action to be accelerated as a matter of urgency throughout Syria;

12. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the implementation of this resolution, and on compliance by all relevant parties in Syria, within 15 days of adoption of this resolution and thereafter within the framework of its reporting on resolutions 2139 (2014), 2165 (2014), 2191 (2014), 2258 (2015), 2332 (2016) and 2393 (2017);

13. *Decides* to remain actively seized of the matter.

United Nations S/2018/147

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 February 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 21 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Following the numerous previous letters that I have addressed to you regarding the repeated and continuing terrorist attacks by armed terrorist groups on the city of Damascus and its suburbs, and upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit herewith a table clarifying the number of civilians killed and injured as a result of rocket-propelled grenades and mortar shells launched by armed terrorist groups against safe neighbourhoods in Damascus during the period from 15 to 18 February 2018. These terrorist attacks have killed and wounded many civilians, mostly women and children, as well as causing serious damage to public and private property and infrastructure.

Date	*Number of rocket-propelled grenades and mortar shells launched*	*Number of civilians killed*	*Number of civilians injured*
15 February 2018	21	–	4
16 February 2018	28	1	3
17 February 2018	19	–	–
18 February 2018	8	–	1
Total	**76**	**1**	**8**

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-02774 (E) 260218

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United Nations S/2018/148

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 February 2018

Original: English

Identical letters dated 21 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Following the numerous previous letters that I have addressed to you regarding the repeated and continuing terrorist attacks by armed terrorist groups on the city of Damascus and its suburbs, and upon instructions from my Government, I have the honour to submit herewith a table clarifying the number of civilians killed and injured as a result of rocket-propelled grenades and mortar shells launched by armed terrorist groups against safe neighbourhoods in Damascus on 19 and 20 February 2018. As I have mentioned in previous letters, these terrorist attacks have killed and wounded many civilians, mostly women and children, as well as causing serious damage to public and private property and infrastructure.

Date	*Number of rocket-propelled grenades and mortar shells launched*	*Number of civilians killed*	*Number of civilians injured*
19 February 2018	28	–	16
20 February 2018	133	9	56
Total	**161**	**9**	**72**

It would be highly appreciated if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-02775 (E) 260218

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United Nations A/72/759–S/2018/149

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 44
Question of Cyprus

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 16 February 2018, addressed to you by the Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, Mehmet Dânâ (see annex).

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Feridun H. **Sinirlioğlu**
Permanent Representative

18-02837 (E) 270218

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Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government, I am writing in response to the letter dated 6 February 2018 addressed to you by the Greek Cypriot representative in New York and circulated as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council (A/72/737-S/2018/96), which, yet again, contains false assertions similar to those made in his previous letters. In order to set the record straight, I should like to bring the following to your kind attention.

At the outset, regarding the claims of so-called "infringements of international air traffic regulations" and "violations of the national airspace of the Republic of Cyprus by Turkey", I wish, once again, to reiterate that flights within the sovereign airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus take place with the full knowledge and consent of the relevant authorities of the State, over which the Greek Cypriot administration in South Cyprus has no jurisdiction or right of say whatsoever. The civil aviation authority of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is the sole competent authority to provide air traffic and aeronautical information services within its own national airspace. As to the false assertion that notices to airmen are "illegally issued", it must be underlined that activities within the Ercan advisory airspace that require notices to airmen are carried out by the relevant authorities of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in accordance with article 3 of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention).

Similarly, the claim in the letter regarding the Turkish Cypriot ports is also baseless, given the fact that the Greek Cypriot administration has no jurisdiction or right of say over Northern Cyprus. Furthermore, that claim ignores the present realities on the ground, namely, the existence of two independent self-governing States on the island of Cyprus, each exercising sovereignty and jurisdiction within its respective territory.

As to the repeated false allegations regarding Ercan Airport in the North, it should once again be underlined that the technologically up-to-date Ercan area control centre and airport in North Cyprus have been providing regular, reliable and safe air traffic services since the Greek Cypriot refusal in 1977 to provide air traffic services in the northern part of the island, in line with its isolation policy that has been imposed on the Turkish Cypriot people. Ever since, all flights within the sovereign airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus have taken place with the full knowledge and permission of the Civil Aviation Department of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, over which the Greek Cypriot administration in South Cyprus has no jurisdiction or control. Furthermore, I should like to stress that the allegation regarding the interference of radio frequencies is also totally baseless.

Moreover, the isolation imposed on the Turkish Cypriots, which the Greek Cypriot side attempts to perpetuate by encouraging the international community to deem all air and sea ports in Northern Cyprus "illegal", is in complete contravention of international law, as well as the call made by the then Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, in his report to the Security Council dated 28 May 2004 (S/2004/437), in which he clearly stated: "I would hope they [members of the Security Council] can give a strong lead to all States to cooperate both bilaterally and in international bodies to eliminate unnecessary restrictions and barriers that have the effect of isolating the Turkish Cypriots and impeding their development, deeming such a move as consistent with Security Council resolutions 541 (1983) and 550 (1984)."

The legislation of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus on aeronautical safety meets all standards and recommendations of the International Civil Aviation

Organization, providing safe and swift navigation of aircraft landing at or taking off from Ercan Airport and using airspace of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. All airports in Northern Cyprus are in full conformity with international standards, and necessary investments have been made to keep up with the developing technology. The number of air traffic controllers has been increased in accordance with the increasing number of flights over the years, and the Ercan area control centre is in regular and close cooperation with the Ankara area control centre in order to ensure the safe conduct of all flights in the region. In 2017 alone, the number of passengers who used Ercan Airport stood at 3,962,541, and this number is expected to reach 4,200,294 in 2018. Moreover, in 2017, 27,197 aeroplanes used Ercan Airport for arrival and departure and 189,787 aeroplanes used the Ercan advisory airspace, and these numbers are expected to reach 27,469 and 193,583, respectively, in 2018. In that regard, it must also be stressed that the Turkish Cypriot side is committed to upholding the highest standards in the field of air navigation safety, in full conformity with the Chicago Convention of 1944, and that it is ready to cooperate with the Greek Cypriot authorities on this very important issue.

Availing myself of the present opportunity, I should like to call upon the Greek Cypriot side to discontinue such counterproductive and outdated rhetoric. Moreover, the Greek Cypriot administration should once again be reminded that its counterpart is, and has always been, the Turkish Cypriot side, not Turkey.

(*Signed*) Mehmet **Dânâ**
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

United Nations A/72/757–S/2018/150

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 34
Prevention of armed conflict

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instructions of my Government and in relation to the letter dated 30 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (A/72/725-S/2018/77), I am writing to express our regret and disappointment about the content and the tone of the above-referenced letter. It would not be our purpose to engage in polemics about the historical background of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, let alone about the history of Armenia and its people, as ample historical records and scholarly research worldwide are widely available and accessible in that regard. History is not written in government offices; propaganda is. As a matter of fact, the preference for propaganda is to relinquish intellectual or factual content. The above-referenced letter is, regrettably, a case in point, as are the latest territorial claims to Yerevan, the capital and other regions of Armenia, uttered by the President of Azerbaijan in his address to the ruling "Yeni Azerbaijan" party on 8 February 2018. The above-referenced letter, therefore, does not merit a substantive response.

However, it is the hate-induced and antagonistic tone of the letter that creates a renewed source of doubt about the genuine intention of the Government of Azerbaijan to seek a negotiated, peaceful compromise based on resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

The letter represents a glaring manifestation of the concerns at the "repeated and unpunished use of inflammatory language by politicians speaking about the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and at its adverse impact on the public's view of ethnic Armenians", expressed in the concluding observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on the combined seventh to ninth periodic reports of Azerbaijan (see CERD/C/AZE/CO/7-9).

It is exactly such language that entices the likes of the notorious Ramil Safarov to commit murders and barbaric acts of mutilation and decapitation against Armenians, as was again the case during the military aggression of Azerbaijan against Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) in April 2016, which was subsequently glorified by their government.

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Since the purpose of the above-referenced letter was to extensively comment on the speech of the President of Armenia at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 24 January 2018, I attach to the present letter, for ease of reference, the full text of the speech (see annex).

Noteworthy is the following quote from the speech of the President of Armenia: "The time is ripe for the resolution of this conflict. It requires strict respect for the established ceasefire regime and honouring all the agreements reached in the past. Settlement must be peaceful and overcome the deficit of justice. No matter where I find myself, I will always be at the forefront for this matter as well. The parties shall assume joint responsibility for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and find a compromise solution, a middle ground settlement".

The international community, including the United Nations, has unequivocally rendered its support to the Co-Chairmanship by France, Russia and the United States of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe as the sole internationally agreed negotiating format for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The compromise solution, proposed by the Co-Chairs, is firmly based on the three fundamental principles of non-use of force or threat of force, equal rights and self-determination of peoples and territorial integrity.

Once again, Armenia reiterates its firm commitment to the early and peaceful settlement of the conflict, based on the compromise proposals of the Co-Chairs. Armenia insists that commitment to peace requires strong and firmly articulated political will and equally resolute efforts to establish and sustain an environment conducive to peace. In his latest speech at the Munich Security Conference on 17 February 2018, the President of Armenia reaffirmed that "the Nagorno-Karabakh issue must be resolved as soon as possible, and by peaceful means".[1] Hate speech and hate propaganda, war mongering and obstruction of human contacts serve the opposite purpose, which is the risk of renewed hostilities with catastrophic consequences for the entire region.

In conclusion, I reiterate Armenia's deep appreciation of your continued support for the efforts of the Co-Chairs to seek a negotiated peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

I kindly request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 34, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Zohrab **Mnatsakanyan**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

[1] www.president.am/en/press-release/item/2018/02/17/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-attended-Munich-security-conference.

Annex to the letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Speech by President Serzh Sargsyan to the January session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, France, 24 January 2018)

Honorable President of the Parliamentary Assembly,
Honorable Secretary General,
Distinguished Members of the Assembly,

At the outset, I would like to warmly greet and congratulate you, distinguished Mr. Nicoletti, on assuming the high office of the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. You have indeed embarked upon this mission in rather challenging times. I strongly believe that your extensive experience and strong personal qualities are exactly what is needed for the future success and reputation of our organization. I also wish to commend Mrs. Kyriakides for her excellent performance in the capacity of President of this Assembly.

The last time I had the honor to speak from this high podium was in 2013, when Armenia held the Chairmanship in the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. That mission served as a key landmark in our integration within the larger family of the Council of Europe. I trust we met the expectations while carrying out that mission.

Tomorrow is January 25 — the day on which we acceded to the Council of Europe exactly 17 years ago. At the time of joining this Europe-wide structure, we were fully aware of the path that lay ahead of us. We were also fully aware that building and strengthening democracy would not be easy without the support and direct involvement of the Council of Europe structures. Indeed, through political will and joint constructive engagement, we managed to overcome numerous obstacles and to achieve profound reforms.

As I stand before this Assembly today, I can proudly state that we have honored the main commitments assumed towards the Council of Europe in terms of Armenia's democratization. This is not merely our assertion. Our achievements in consolidating the democratic institutions have been recognized by the monitoring reports of the Council of Europe's bodies. We firmly continue the efforts of joining the Europe-wide legal frameworks: the number of conventions Armenia has already signed up is close to 70. For us, this process is not simply about honoring the commitments that we undertook. In doing so, we are primarily implementing our own credo and our own convictions. We shall continue in that same vein. Moreover, our country's progress on the path of reforms will get a new momentum and accelerate in April, when the amendments to the constitution will enter into full force, and when we will embark upon the implementation of activities envisaged by our Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement with the European Union.

Any democracy is a living organism. Throughout our quarter-century-long efforts in State-building we aimed at nourishing this very organism. We have been fully conscious that democracy constantly requires attention, review, and advancement; it cannot afford a standstill, and must keep up with the rapidly changing times in order to remain viable. Along the lines of this logic, we undertook constitutional reform in Armenia, which received wide-ranging support of the Council of Europe.

The process will be completed in April with a clear vision of strengthening the three pillars of the Council of Europe — the rule of law, protection of human rights, and democracy. We chose a transition to a parliamentary form of government as the most suitable path for strengthening democracy in our country. I announced the launch of the process back in 2013 when I spoke from this high podium before this Assembly.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since our accession to the Council of Europe, we have heard both encouragement and criticism from our partners. I have no doubt that both have helped Armenia's progress.

Throughout this time, we have closely cooperated with the Venice Commission, based on the expert opinion of which we refined the constitutional reforms package. In an atmosphere of mutual trust, this efficient engagement continues up to date — through a process of implementing numerous new legislative solutions under the reformed Constitution. It was best manifested in the deliberations on Armenia's new Electoral Code, which resulted in the adoption of a transparent and inclusive process with participation of various political actors across the board. We opted for something unprecedented — stipulating by law the demand to published the signed lists of voters after the election. As you are aware, this practice is not common, especially in light of personal data protection concerns. However, we decided and we did it, in order to secure greater public trust in the elections.

The new Electoral Code clearly proved its viability in the 2017 April parliamentary election, which was observed by a large number of invited observation missions, including a delegation of this Assembly.

It is important to underline that the new Electoral Code also resulted in allocation of a certain number of seats in the National Assembly exclusively for the representatives of the national minorities. It was yet another step towards achieving governance that is more inclusive.

We are currently reforming our judicial, criminal, and criminal procedure codes, as well as the Referendum Act and the Constitutional Court Act. We are well aware that only effective, independent, and free from corruption risks judiciary can safeguard the rule of law.

In this context, we appreciate the important role of the European Court of Human Rights, the jurisprudence of which plays an essential role in enhancing the quality of justice in our country. We have implemented a number of legislative reforms and improved the legal practices on the basis of the ECHR jurisprudence. These are important steps for consolidation of the human rights protection in our country. These efforts have not gone unnoticed: the Republic of Armenia is a leader among the Council of Europe member States in terms of the proper and persistent implementation of the judgments of the European Court.

We are convinced that proper protection of human rights and consolidation of democratic values cannot be effective without a relentless fight against corruption. It must be guaranteed at all social and political layers. Armenia has contemplated a qualitatively new toolkit in this respect: in mid-2017, the National Assembly unanimously adopted a number of Acts that create a first-ever national entity for the prevention of corruption in line with all international standards. The entity will get effectively functioning in 2018, and the Parliament will elect its members. The anti-corruption package also resulted in the adoption of the Act on whistleblowing and protection of whistleblowers. We also criminalized illegal enrichement. We are determined and committed to continue our systematic and persistent efforts towards elimination of the evil of corruption day in and day out.

Distinguished Members of the Assembly,

Since accession to the Council of Europe, our country has born profound responsibility for honoring our obligations and respecting our collective commitment to the fundamental values of this organization.

However, in recent years, we have witnessed an unfortunate and unprecedented crisis of values in this organization: through their irresponsible conduct, to say the least, some MPs have acted contrary to the core mission of the Council of Europe and inflicted heavy damage upon the organization's reputation. The greater family of the Council of Europe thus faced perhaps the most serious challenge since its foundation, as cases of bribing Assembly members and resulting dishonest voting were exposed.

Since 2014, a number of politically biased and egregious reports and resolutions triggered a sharp change in the attitudes of Armenian society towards this Assembly. However, these revelations justify the hopes that such corrupt practices are short-lived. Eventually, they will rise to the surface, stamping out resolutions thus adopted, and discrediting the individuals and powers that back them. I am convinced that the report of the independent inquiry body looking into the exposed instances of corruption will eradicate those defective practices and help to strengthen the member States' trust in our organization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Upon accession to the Council of Europe, Armenia also undertook a commitment to pursue efforts to settle the Nagorno Karabakh conflict by peaceful means only and to use its influence over Artsakh to foster the solution to the conflict. Although the Council of Europe is not a conflict resolution platform, I believe it is appropriate to briefly touch upon the issue in light of our aforementioned commitment.

Exactly 30 years ago, on the surface, everything could possibly seem calm and peaceful in Artsakh. However, the surface image was deceiving. We had never put up with Stalin's decision to annex Artsakh to Azerbaijan.

Throughout all those years, the people of Artsakh were extremely anxious because the Baku authorities did their best to drive Armenians out of their historic cradle. According to the 1926 census, Armenians accounted for over 90 percent of Artsakh's population; as a consequence of the Baku policies, the percentage had declined to just 77 percent of the population by 1988. I myself was among the Artsakhtsies that were worried about these developments.

In February 1988, the Artsakhtsies rose against the Baku policies and tried to exercise the Artsakh people's right to self-determination in a peaceful way. I was at the forefront of the uprising. The Parliament of Artsakh took the decision, and people went out for peaceful rallies. Azerbaijan's reaction was not simply a negative one. Azerbaijan's reaction was the massacre of Armenians living in the town of Sumgait hundreds of kilometers away from Artsakh. It was an act of revenge against Armenians for the decision adopted by Artsakh.

One side of the scale had a parliament's decision and a peaceful demonstration, and the other had violence and massacres. Everyone who needs to deal with the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict resolution must clearly comprehend this fact.

Hence, all attempts to put the parties of the conflict on the equal footing are inherently futile. Such an equation is nothing but false impartiality. It is an equality sign between the perpetrators of the Sumgait massacre and its victims. On February 27, we shall commemorate the victims of the Sumgait massacre.

The massacres went on to become the state policy, as Azerbaijan unleashed a war aimed at the complete annihilation of the Armenian population of Artsakh. Given the deficit of justice and the threat of extermination, Artsakh had no other choice but to resort to self-defense. Yet again, I was at the forefront, and I have never had the slightest regret about the choice I made then.

The time is ripe for the resolution of this conflict. It requires strict respect for the established ceasefire regime and honoring all the agreements reached in the past. Settlement must be peaceful and overcome the deficit of justice. No matter where I find myself, I will always be at the forefront for this matter as well. The parties shall assume joint responsibility for the peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and find a compromise solution, a middle ground settlement.

The negotiation process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs is the only internationally agreed format for the resolution of this conflict. The international community, including Council of Europe, has reiterated its support to this format on numerous occasions. The commitment undertaken by Armenia and Azerbaijan requires a joint and concerted effort of all the parties to the conflict.

However, Azerbaijan is obviously not ready for it. The aggression that Azerbaijan unleashed against Artsakh in April 2016 was characterized by egregious violations of the international humanitarian law against the peaceful civilians and prisoners of war. It struck a heavy blow upon the negotiation process by reawakening dreadful memories of the Sumgait massacres.

Unfortunately, this Assembly has at times allowed developments that turned a blind eye to the aforementioned facts, watering the mill of those who are not interested in peaceful settlement of the conflict. I call upon all the members of this Assembly to apprehend the potential negative consequences of a careless or biased language for the fragile stability in Artsakh.

Facing a permanent threat of war, Artsakh continues to build democracy and to promote respect for human rights. In all of these initiatives, Armenia will continue to provide full support to Artsakh. Armenia will tenaciously defend the rights and interests of Artsakh and help to strengthen Artsakh's security. As the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has rightly noted, there must be no grey zones in Europe when it comes to the protection of human rights. I hope that in the not-too-distant future, this organization, too, will stand by the side of Artsakh with all of its expertise. A person living in Artsakh deserves it; the people of Artsakh have long earned this right.

The protection of human rights is a priority for the Artsakh government: as to the fundamental documents of the Council of Europe, Artsakh unilaterally subscribed to the European Convention of Human Rights back in 2015 and undertook to implement it fully. Commendably, Nagorno Karabakh has achieved all of this on its own, without tangible support from any international organization. It proves once again that in Artsakh respect for and protection of human rights are not mere words, but a conscious and determined choice.

Artsakh cannot stay out of the international processes simply because Azerbaijan is opposed to it. The authorities of Azerbaijan commit flagrant violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms — not least the criminal prosecution of opposition figures and even their abduction from the territory of another country.

This brings me back to the work of the European Court of Human Rights: the ECHR has examined applications by Azerbaijani citizens that are also related to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. I understand that the ECHR takes up these issues with the purpose of precluding "grey areas" and safeguarding human rights throughout Europe. Nevertheless, political language and assessments in the

decisions of the ECHR can have direct negative impact on the negotiation process. Therefore, it is necessary for the ECHR to exercise extreme caution in its assessments and avoid any political language.

Distinguished Members of the Assembly,

Our national economies are more vulnerable than ever in the face of present-day global challenges. As a result, welfare and prosperity are at the center of public attention. The challenging realities in our region in their turn undermine the economic growth potential. Therefore, we aspire to make the best use of all available resources, including the opportunities availed to us by integration structures.

Five years ago, in 2013, shortly after Armenia's decision to accede to the Eurasian Economic Union, many people, including a number of them in this Assembly, expressed skepticism towards Armenia. However, Armenia proved her ability to combine engagement in different integration structures and even to serve as a role model of cooperation. On this day two months ago, on November 24, on the margins of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels, Armenia and the European Union concluded a Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement, which contemplates a completely new quality of engagement. Armenia's fully-fledged integration in the Eurasian Economic Union was not an obstacle for that matter in any way or shape.

Today, we actively continue to extend our international engagement in various other directions. The Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie is a case in point; that is for us a unique platform of engagement in terms of both language and culture, as well as for promotion of human rights. Armenia will have the honor to host the 17th Summit of la Francophonie in October 2018 in Yerevan.

The motto of the summit will be "Vivre ensemble/Living Together," and a pact with the same name will be adopted for strengthening human rights and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. For us, it is not simply a motto: the Armenian nation knows the price of hate speech, intolerance, and discrimination, and we fight against such practices on all possible platforms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Next year, we will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Council of Europe. It is a crucial landmark for our greater family, which has been fighting for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe for almost seven decades now. An organization created by only 10 States, it now unites 47 States of the European Family with a population of 820 million. I consider this to be an enormous achievement that should be cherished; no effort should be spared in building a positive agenda and further enhancing the role and significance of this organization.

The mission of the Council of Europe, however, extends beyond this. The organization has a great role to play in political as well as civilizational terms. I believe that the organization needs a further stimulus in redefining its role and significance in Europe-wide political architecture. Contemporary mechanisms and arrangements are truly wanted by our societies in order to increase this Organization's effectiveness. For quite some time now, we are closely following the commendable process of reforms initiated in the Council of Europe by the Secretary General.

Armenia supports the idea of convening a 4th Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe. I believe it will be a good opportunity for identifying the most pressing problems of our continent and revisiting the vision of a stronger and more inclusive Europe. I am confident that the founders of the Council of Europe should have been very proud about the fact of uniting 47 countries of

Europe under one roof. This is an achievement the importance of which should not be underestimated; this unity needs continuous support from all of us.

Armenia stands ready for the persistent journey towards a more mature form of engagement and cooperation. Armenia stands ready to contribute by all means at its disposal to the success of the Council of Europe — our shared home of democracy and the rule of law.

Thank you.

United Nations S/2018/151

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2018

Original: English

Letter dated 20 February 2018 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 15 February 2018 from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, which includes the communiqué of the 752nd meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held on 13 February 2018, and the decision of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States dated 4 February 2018, imposing sanctions on 19 individuals in Guinea-Bissau (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) António **Guterres**

18-02871 (E) 270218

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Annex

Letter dated 15 February 2018 from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to you with regard to the current situation in Guinea-Bissau and our efforts to support the search for a lasting solution to the protracted crisis facing the country.

Against the backdrop of a continued stalemate, the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) decided, on 4 February 2018, to impose sanctions on those impeding the search for a solution. At its 752nd meeting, held on 13 February 2018, the African Union Peace and Security Council endorsed the measures taken by ECOWAS to impose individual sanctions and called on the United Nations Security Council to do the same, so as to restore democratic governance and ensure respect for the rule of law in the country.

I am forwarding herewith the above-mentioned Peace and Security Council communiqué of 13 February 2018 (see enclosure I) as well as the ECOWAS decision of 4 February 2018 imposing sanctions aimed at restoring democratic governance and ensuring respect for the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau (see enclosure II). I would be most grateful if the present letter and its enclosures could be urgently transmitted to the Security Council for its information and action as appropriate.

I look forward to the Security Council's full support to the ECOWAS-led efforts and endorsement of the decision adopted by ECOWAS.

(*Signed*) Moussa **Faki Mahamat**

Enclosure I

[Original: English and French]

Communiqué of the 752nd meeting of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, held on 13 February 2018

The Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the African Union (AU), at its 752nd meeting, held on 13 February 2018, adopted the following decision on the situation in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau.

Council,

1. **Takes note** of the briefing made by the Commissioner for Peace and Security, Ambassador Smail Chergui and the statement made by Togo, in its capacity as the Chair of the Authority of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS);

2. **Recalls** its previous communiques and press statements on the situation in Guinea-Bissau, in particular, Press Statement [PSC/PR/BR.(DCXXXIV)] adopted at its 734th meeting, held on 14 November 2017, urging the Guinea Bissau stakeholders to work resolutely for the effective implementation of the Conakry Agreement of 14 October 2016 and the Bissau Roadmap, with a view to ending the current crisis in their country, as well as calling the political leadership of Guinea Bissau, including the President of the Republic, to demonstrate utmost restraint, statesmanship and high spirit of responsibility and comply with the country's constitution, with a view to identifying a quick way out of the current political deadlock;

3. **Recalls** the decision of the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the Union held from 28 to 29 January 2018, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, which called on Bissau-Guinean stakeholders to abide by their commitments so as to resolve the crisis and ensure a successful and timely conduct of the upcoming 2018 legislative elections, and endorsed the decision adopted by the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the ECOWAS on the margins of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 27 January 2018 on the situation in Guinea-Bissau;

4. **Further recalls** Article 16 of the Protocol Relating to the Establishment of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union and the relevant provisions of the AU Constitutive Act and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance;

5. **Reiterates its deep concern** over the continued political standoff in the country coupled with the persistent socio-economic difficulties that the current crisis has caused to the people of Guinea Bissau, as well as the paralysis affecting the Government institutions and the People's National Assembly;

6. **Commends** the efforts deployed by ECOWAS to finding a lasting solution to the current crisis in Guinea Bissau and **welcomes** the Decision A/Dec.2.01/2018 Imposing Individual Sanctions Aimed at Restoring Democratic Governance and Ensuring Respect for the Rule of Law in Guinea Bissau issued by the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government on 4 February 2018, following the assessment mission of the High Level delegation to Guinea-Bissau, conducted from 31 January to 1 February 2018;

7. **Reaffirms** its commitment to continue to closely follow all political developments and to support ECOWAS in its efforts to ensure a swift resolution of the protracted crisis in Guinea-Bissau. Furthermore, Council **reaffirms** its readiness to assist the parties in Guinea Bissau in their search for a rapid settlement of the

current crisis, in strict respect of the constitutional and legal provisions, as well as in the light of all agreements signed to date;

8. **Urges** all Bissau-Guinean parties to refrain from actions or statements that could escalate tensions and incite violence. In the same vein, Council **underscores** the need for the security and armed forces of Guinea Bissau to refrain from interfering in this political and institutional crisis and to continue to uphold the country's constitution;

9. **Appeals** to all Member States and partners to financially support the continuation of the mandate of the ECOWAS Mission in Guinea-Bissau (ECOMIB) operations in Guinea-Bissau, whose mandate has been extended to 31 March 2018, until the necessary capacitation of the national security forces of Guinea Bissau is completed. In this regard, Council **requests** the AU Commission, in consultations with ECOWAS, to mobilize financial resources to support ECOMIB operations;

10. **Decides** to endorse the measures taken by ECOWAS in its 4 February 2018 decision, including sanctions against "political obstructionists" who are hampering the process of ending the crisis in the country. In this regard, Council **requests** the AU Commission to coordinate with the ECOWAS Commission, in order to ensure effective implementation of these measures. Furthermore, Council **calls** on the international community to extend full cooperation with ECOWAS and support the implementation of the sanction measures;

11. **Requests** the United Nations Security Council to endorse the PSC Communique endorsing the ECOWAS decision, in order to ensure its effective implementation;

12. **Further requests** the AU Chairperson to transmit the communiqué to the UN Secretary-General, through him to the UN Security Council and to request that it be circulated as an official UN Security Council document;

13. **Also requests** the AU Commission to continue to provide regular updates to Council on the evolution of the situation in Guinea-Bissau;

14. **Decides** to remain actively seized of the situation.

Enclosure II

[Original: English and French]

ECOWAS Decision A/DEC.2.01/2018 imposing individual sanctions aimed at restoring democratic governance and ensuring respect for the rule of law in Guinea-Bissau

THE AUTHORITY OF HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT,

MINDFUL of Articles 11 and 12 of the Protocol relating to the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management, Resolution, Peacekeeping and Security signed in Lome on 10 December 1999;

MINDFUL of the ECOWAS Declaration of Political Principles adopted in Abuja on 6 July 1991;

MINDFUL of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance signed in Dakar on 21 December 2001;

MINDFUL of the principles set out in the OAU Solemn Declaration on Security, Stability, Development and Cooperation in Africa adopted in Abuja on 8 and 9 May 2000, and Decision AHG. DEC.142 (xxv) on the framework for OAU's reaction to unconstitutional change of government adopted in Algiers in July 1999;

CONSIDERING that the Guinea Bissau authorities have endorsed the Bissau and Conakry Agreements to be implemented to ensure return to constitutional and democratic order in the Republic of Guinea Bissau;

CONSIDERING that despite the continued mediation efforts no significant progress has been made in the implementation of the agreements;

TAKING DUE ACCOUNT of the final communiqué of the extraordinary session of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 27 January 2018, in the margins of the 30th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of States and Government of the African Union;

RECALLING that the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government, at its Extraordinary Session held on 27 January 2018, invited the Guinea Bissau parties to implement the Conakry Agreement, failing which individual and collective sanctions would be imposed to end the crisis in Guinea Bissau;

RECALLING also that the Authority instructed the President of the Commission to apply the sanctions and put in place a committee, comprising Togo, Guinea and the ECOWAS Commission, to monitor the implementation of the sanctions;

NOTING that the Conakry Agreement has not been implemented and hence the need to impose sanctions on defaulters;

DESIROUS of creating favourable conditions for the resumption of dialogue among Guinea Bissau stakeholders, as well as for the restoration of democratic governance and respect for the rule of law in Guinea Bissau;

DECIDES

Article 1 Imposition of sanctions

By virtue of this Decision, sanctions are imposed on the following persons:

- BRAIMA CAMARA
- RUI DIA DE SOUSA
- SOARES SAMBU
- ABEL DA SILVA GOMES
- MANUEL NASCIMENTO LOPES
- EDUARDO MAMADU BALDE
- MARIA AURORA ABISSA SANO
- FLORENTINO MENDES PEREIRA
- ORLANDO MENDES VIEGAS
- CERTORIO BIOTE
- DOMINGOS QUADE
- CARLITOS BARAI
- DOMINGOS MALU
- ANTONIO SEDJA MAN
- BACARI BIAI
- BOTCHE CANDE
- HERSON GOUDJABI VAZ
- VICTOR MADINGA
- FERNANDO VAZ

Article 2 Sanctions

The sanctions stated hereunder contained in Supplementary Act A/SA.13/02/12 of 17 February 2012 on sanctions against Member States which fail to honour their obligations to ECOWAS and Article 45 of the Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance are imposed on the afore-mentioned persons:

a) suspension from participation in Community activities,

b) travel ban and denial of visas for these persons and their families,

c) freeze of the financial assets of these persons and their families wherever they may be.

Article 3 Notification of sanctions

1. The President of the Commission shall notify the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the African Union Peace and Security Council of the Decision for any appropriate action.

2. The President of the Commission shall equally notify Member States, Community Institutions, European Union, International Organisation of the Francophonie, CPLP and United Nations of the Decision and shall request the support of these organisations in implementation of the sanctions.

Article 4 Review of the list of persons under sanctions

The committee monitoring implementation of the sanctions shall reserve the right to review the list of persons placed under sanctions based on changes in the situation.

Article 5 Entry into force and publication

The Decision, which shall enter into force upon signature, shall be published by the Commission in the Official Journal of the Community within thirty days of its signing. It shall equally be published by each Member States in its national Gazette within the same timeframe, following notification by the Commission.

DONE AT LOME, THIS 04 DAY OF FEBRUARY 2018

IN ONE SINGLE ORIGINAL IN THE ENGLISH, FRENCH AND PORTUGUESE LANGUAGES

ALL THREE TEXTS BEING EQUALLY AUTHENTIC

H.E. Mr. FAURE ESSOZIMNA GNASSINGBE
CHAIRMAN
FOR THE AUTHORITY

United Nations S/2018/152

Security Council

Distr.: General
26 February 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Identical letters dated 21 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

The United States-led "international coalition" continues to perpetrate massacres against Syrian civilians, adding to its countless crimes. On Tuesday, 20 February 2018, this "coalition" once again massacred Syrian civilians when its warplanes bombed residential neighbourhoods in the rural village of Bahra in eastern Dayr al-Zawr governorate. The bombardment led to the deaths of 16 civilians, 9 of them women, and the destruction of civilian homes and property and village infrastructure.

In furtherance of the mission for which it was founded, namely, undermining the sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic, the "international coalition", which has destroyed the city of Raqqah, sent its inhabitants fleeing and killed thousands of its innocent civilian residents, continues to support and protect the remnants of the terrorist organization Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). As part of this coalition, American forces rescued the terrorist remnants of ISIL and reconstituted them as separatist proxy militias of the United States in Hasakah, Raqqah and Dayr al-Zawr governorates. American forces have also thrown every possible obstacle in the path of the Syrian Arab Army and its allies, impeding their war on the terrorist ISIL organization. An example of this occurred on 8 February 2018, when American aircraft targeted popular forces that were clashing with terrorist ISIL fighters, killing dozens of those forces. This certainly will not be the last such incident.

The Syrian Arab Republic stresses that the Security Council must take action to stop these coalition crimes against the Syrian people, end the illegal presence of American forces in Syrian territory and prevent the United States from carrying out its underhanded schemes to partition the Syrian Arab Republic and plunder its resources.

I should be grateful if the present letter could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Bashar **Ja'afari**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

18-02939 (E) 270218 280218

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United Nations S/2018/153

Security Council

Distr.: General
23 February 2018
English
Original: Arabic

Letter dated 14 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

Further to the letters that I had sent to the Security Council previously, the most recent of which was my letter of 12 September 2017 (S/2017/791), regarding the occupation of the Sudanese Hala'ib triangle by Egypt, I regret that I must inform you yet again that the Egyptian authorities are continuing their efforts, programmes, plans and measures to Egyptianize the Sudanese Hala'ib triangle, perpetuate their occupation and impose a fait accompli, in clear and flagrant violation of the relevant international instruments, including international humanitarian and human rights instruments. In that connection, I should like to note that Sudanese citizens residing in the triangle have been the victims of the measures taken and violations committed by the occupying Egyptian authorities, who have detained, expelled and forcibly displaced Sudanese nationals from their areas and brought in Egyptian nationals to replace them, with a view to Egyptianizing and changing the demographic composition of the triangle and perpetuating the occupation.

The above-mentioned measures fly in the face of the fundamental principles that underpin the Charter of the United Nations. Among those principles is the resolution of conflicts by peaceful means, including arbitration, something for which the Government of the Sudan has called should the Egyptian Government fail to end its occupation of the triangle. As we have stated before, we are calling for such measures to be taken by two States that have many ties.

International law, in general, and international humanitarian law, in particular, impose obligations on occupying States. With that in mind, I should like to draw your attention to some of the outrageous violations that have been committed against Sudanese nationals in occupied Sudanese territory over the past few months (see annex).

I should like to inform you once again that the Government of the Sudan rejects and does not recognize these measures and practices.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Omer Dahab Fadl **Mohamed**
Permanent Representative of the Sudan

18-02859 (E) 270218 270218

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Annex to the letter dated 14 February 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Measures taken by the Egyptian Government to Egyptianize the Sudanese Hala'ib triangle (Hala'ib, Shalatin and Abu Ramad) and perpetuate its occupation thereof

- A delegation of Egyptian social affairs officials arrived in Hala'ib on 27 December 2017 and issued Egyptian national service exemption cards to Sudanese tribespersons who are residents of Hala'ib. Those officials also registered 50 of the tribespersons for employment in the civil service and initiated construction of a new building.
- On 27 December 2017, an Egyptian helicopter arrived at Abu Ramad airport from Baranis. It flew over Sarmatay and conducted patrols in that area.
- On 28 December 2017, a soldier of the Egyptian Border Guard fired at the Sudanese national Muhammad Adam Hasan, a member of the Bashariyyin tribe and a resident of Hala'ib al-Jadidah.
- On 29 December 2017, the Egyptian Minister of Awqaf, Muhammad Mukhtar Juma'h, accompanied by the Governor of Red Sea governorate, visited the Abu Ramad regional mosque. Accompanied by a large delegation from Cairo and many Egyptian journalists, he opened the Hala'ib al-Jadidah mosque and performed the Friday prayer there. The Minister addressed the worshippers and promised that the area's infrastructure would be developed and services provided. He also visited Shalatin and met with its citizens. He told them that Halai'b was Egyptian and promised to provide various services, including security, health-care and education.
- On 30 December 2017, the occupying forces engaged in intensive military activity, on the ground and in the air.
- In our letter dated 12 September 2017 (S/2017/791), we informed the Security Council that the occupying authorities had arrested a number of Sudanese nationals on 2 August 2017. We have information indicating that those individuals have been thrown into jails in the Egyptian cities of Aswan, Ghardaqah, Safaja and Marsa Alam. The Sudanese authorities refused the request that was made by the Egyptian Government to produce travel documents for the detainees. It did so because those individuals are Sudanese nationals who were within the borders of their country, and they were expelled in order to displace them and change the demographic composition by force.
- We also informed the Security Council in our letter of 17 July 2017 (S/2017/616) that the occupying authorities, as part of their efforts to Egyptianize the triangle and erase its Sudanese identity, had changed the names of schools in the triangle and renamed them after Egyptian figures, and had replaced the Sudanese curriculum with the Egyptian curriculum. That same information appeared in the 25 September 2017 edition of the Egyptian newspaper *Misry al-Yawm*. The above is a clear example of the violations that any occupying Power can commit of international law, and of international humanitarian law in particular.
- The occupying Power continues to plunder the mineral and marine resources of the area.